

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA**

FINAL

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BLVD
GAS PIPELINE
RCS 04-799**

MARCH 2006

Prepared for:

**OKALOOSA GAS DISTRICT
VALPARAISO, FLORIDA**

Prepared by:

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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BLVD GAS PIPELINE
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA
RCS 04-799

Background: Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts (CFR) 1500-1508), Department of Defense Directive 6050.1 and Air Force Regulation 32 CFR part 989, Okaloosa Gas District (Okaloosa Gas) with support from the Air Force has conducted an Environmental Assessment (EA) of probable consequences for upgrading the existing gas pipeline from Eglin's Air Combat Command (ACC) Gate to College Boulevard. This improvement would occur exclusively on Eglin Air Force Base (AFB) property.

The purpose of the proposed action is to provide additional gas capacity necessary to meet current demand and future growth for the Niceville, Valparaiso, and Eglin AFB areas while decreasing pressure on an existing 6-inch pipeline located in the proposed project area. The EA considered all potential impacts of the proposed action and no action alternative, both as solitary actions and in conjunction with other activities. This Finding of No Significant Impact summarizes the environmental results of implementing the proposed action. Discussion focuses on activities that have potential to change both the natural and human environments.

Proposed Action and No Action Alternative: The EA, which is hereby incorporated by reference, assesses the environmental impacts associated with the proposed installation, operation, and maintenance of a 10-inch natural gas pipeline within Eglin AFB. Okaloosa Gas is requesting permission to install the proposed 10-inch gas pipeline, which will connect with an existing pipeline on the west side of State Highway 85 across from Eglin's ACC Gate and terminate at College Boulevard, where it will connect to another existing pipeline.

The potential environmental effects associated with the proposed action and the no action alternative were assessed for the following environmental resources: air quality, noise, water resources, geology and soils, land use, environmental justice, socio-economics, biological and cultural resources, utilities, transportation, hazardous materials, and indirect impacts. Cumulative effects resulting from the overlap of the proposed action with other planned activities and other reasonably foreseeable actions were also assessed.

Under the no action alternative, the additional pipeline would not be built. This option is not preferred due to capacity limitations on the existing 6-inch pipeline. The primary objective of providing additional capacity to the Niceville, Valparaiso, and Eglin AFB areas, while maintaining the reliability and integrity of Okaloosa Gas' transmission systems, would not be met.

Environmental Impacts: Potential environmental consequences of the proposed action and the no action alternative are presented in Section 4.0 of the EA. Issues discussed address effects to the resources described in Section 3.0 of the EA. Air emissions estimated for construction

activities resulting from the proposed action would not adversely affect regional air quality. Noise from the proposed action would be consistent with the current noise environments on Eglin AFB. Short-term construction related impacts are anticipated to be very minor and would have no effect on existing land uses. The proposed action would occur within the boundary of Eglin AFB and would neither have an impact on low income or minority populations, nor constitute a disproportionate impact to low income or minority populations in Okaloosa County. There would be no environmental justice impacts associated with the proposed action.

Impacts to surface water resources and wetlands would be avoided with implementation of the proposed action since subterranean boring techniques and best management practices would be utilized for the portion of the proposed action that intersects Toms Creek and two riprap storm water drainage areas along College Boulevard. Toms Creek is a documented Okaloosa darter habitat, a federally endangered species. Informal Endangered Species Act Section 7 Consultation determined construction of this pipeline is not likely to adversely affect the species (Refer to Appendix D of EA). The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) concurred with this determination after conducting its review.

There is a potential impact to gopher tortoises, a state-listed species of concern. However, prior to any land disturbing activities, Eglin AFB Natural Resource Branch would conduct a survey of the project area to determine if gopher tortoises are present. This is standard pre-construction practice at Eglin AFB. If tortoises or burrows are found, Eglin AFB personnel would contact FWC as directed in a September 2005 letter (Refer to Appendix G of the EA). While the tortoise is not federally listed, it is considered a keystone species – a species whose presence is ecologically significant to the survival of other species within its environment. The federally listed eastern indigo snake utilizes abandoned tortoise burrows. As part of the tortoise survey, Eglin personnel would ensure no indigo snakes are present. Should an indigo snake be sighted, project personnel would be directed to cease any activities and allow the snake sufficient time to move away from the site on its own before resuming construction activities.

On 4 March 2005, Okaloosa Gas submitted a Joint Application for Works in the Waters of Florida to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for agency review pursuant to Part IV, chapter 373, Florida Statutes, for the Proposed Action. Based on the agency's review process and field verification, the FDEP determined that the proposed action is exempt from wetland resource permitting requirements.

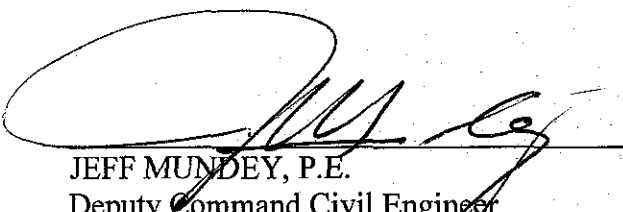
The proposed action as outlined in this EA is not expected to have any adverse impacts to biological species or earth resources. An archaeological survey conducted along the route of the proposed action did not identify any cultural resources.

With implementation of the proposed action, no adverse impacts are anticipated to utilities or transportation at Eglin AFB. The proposed action does not include the transfer, storage, or disposal of any hazardous waste material.

There are no direct, indirect, or cumulative impacts associated with the proposed action or the no action alternative. The proposed action as outlined will not result in any adverse impacts to resources located along the route of the proposed pipeline.

Public Notice: This EA was made available for public review and comment from 26 July 2005 to 9 August 2005 at the Fort Walton Public Library, and Niceville Public Library following advertisement in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on 26 July 2005. Comments were required not later than 12 August 2005. No comments were received during this period. The EA was also submitted to the Florida State Clearinghouse for agency review and comment. The state determined that the Proposed Action is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program.

Finding of No Significant Impact: Based upon my review of the facts and the environmental analysis contained in the attached EA and summarized above, I find the proposed decision of the Air Force to allow Okaloosa Gas to construct, maintain, and operate the 10-inch natural gas pipeline on Eglin AFB will not have a significant impact on the human or natural environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This analysis fulfills the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the President's Council on Environmental Quality and 32 CFR Part 989.



JEFF MUNDEY, P.E.
Deputy Command Civil Engineer
Directorate of Installations and Mission Support

Date

6/16/06

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAC	Air Armament Center
ACC	Air Combat Command
ACQR	Air Quality Control Region
AFB	Air Force Base
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AFR	Air Force Regulation
AFPD	Air Force Policy Directive
Air Force	United States Air Force
BMP	Best Management Practice
BRAC	Base Realignment and Closure
CAA	Clean Air Act
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CMZA	Coastal Zone Management Act
CWA	Clean Water Act of 1972
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DoD	Department of Defense
EA	Environmental Assessment
EIAP	Environmental Impact Analysis Process
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EO	Executive Order
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
EBS	Environmental Baseline Study
FDEP	Florida Department of Environmental Protection
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FFWCC	Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
MMBtu	Million British thermal units
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSL	Mean Sea Level
NAAQS	National Ambient Air Quality Standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OCWS	Okaloosa County Water and Sewer
PM	Particulate Matter
PM ₁₀	Particulate Matter equal to or less than 10 microns in size
ppm	parts per million
QEP	Qualified Environmental Professional
REM	Registered Environmental Manager
ROI	Region of Influence
SCS	Soil Conservation Service
SR	State Road
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
µg/m ³	micrograms per cubic meter

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to install, operate and maintain a ten-inch (10") high-pressure natural gas pipeline along a route approximately 4.58 miles located within Eglin Air Force Base (AFB). Okaloosa Gas District (Okaloosa Gas) is requesting permission to install this proposed 10" natural gas pipeline which will connect with an existing pipeline on the west side of State Road (SR) 85 across from Eglin's Air Combat Command (ACC) Gate and terminate at College Boulevard, where it will connect to another existing Okaloosa Gas pipeline. The new pipeline would provide additional gas capacity necessary to meet current demand and future growth and ensure a reliable supply of natural gas to Okaloosa Gas District's customers, including Eglin AFB.

Okaloosa Gas supplies natural gas to Eglin AFB and most of Okaloosa County, including Fort Walton Beach, Cinco Bayou, Destin, Mary Esther, Okaloosa Island, Shalimar, Niceville, Valparaiso, and unincorporated areas. The primary purpose of this proposed 10" pipeline is to provide additional capacity to Eglin AFB and the adjacent communities of Niceville and Valparaiso. In addition, there is a need to decrease pressure on an existing 6" pipeline currently serving these areas. The 6" line is safe, but undersized. It is limited on how much gas can safely go through it. This capacity limitation on the 6" line is creating a "bottleneck effect" restricting gas flow and pressure between the north end and south end of Okaloosa Gas' pipeline distribution loop. The looped system provides stability (multiple feeders), however, if there were an interruption on the system leaving only the 6" line in service, Eglin AFB could be adversely affected in total gas availability. The objectives of the new 10" pipeline are to provide additional natural gas supply, prevent an interruption in service while maintaining the reliability and integrity of the transmission system, and allowing the pressure on the existing 6" line to be lowered. The 6" line would remain in service to supply gas to the Okaloosa Regional Airport, which is co-located with Eglin AFB (both commercial and military air traffic share the airport facilities).

Additional capacity is needed to meet both current and future demands for natural gas. The basis for this need is:

- A recent Engineering Report concluded that sales of natural gas by Okaloosa Gas to its customers is expected to increase from 3,250,845 million British thermal units (MMBtu) per year in 2005 to 4,000,000 MMBtu by the year 2015 (King, 2005a).
- As a result of the recent Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) 2005 process, the Department of Defense recommended personnel and mission realignments to Eglin AFB that will result in an estimated \$304 million dollars in new construction spending and the addition of approximately 6,000 military and civilian personnel to the base by 2010. Additionally, contract and construction non-military support personnel are expected to add approximately 10,000 more personnel. These factors along with a projected increase in population growth for the Niceville/Valparaiso communities will create considerable new demand for natural gas usage for both Eglin AFB and the surrounding communities serviced by Okaloosa Gas.

The main beneficiary of the additional gas capacity would be Eglin AFB (75 percent) with 25 percent benefiting the adjacent communities (Rhebi 2005a). The proposed 10" high pressure gas pipeline will provide increased capacity to safely and adequately meet the needs of the customers in these areas, including Eglin AFB, and ensure reliability.

The environmental impacts associated with the installation, operation, and maintenance of this proposed 10" high-pressure natural gas pipeline project within the Eglin AFB military reservation are evaluated and addressed in this Environmental Assessment (EA) as they apply to the Proposed Action.

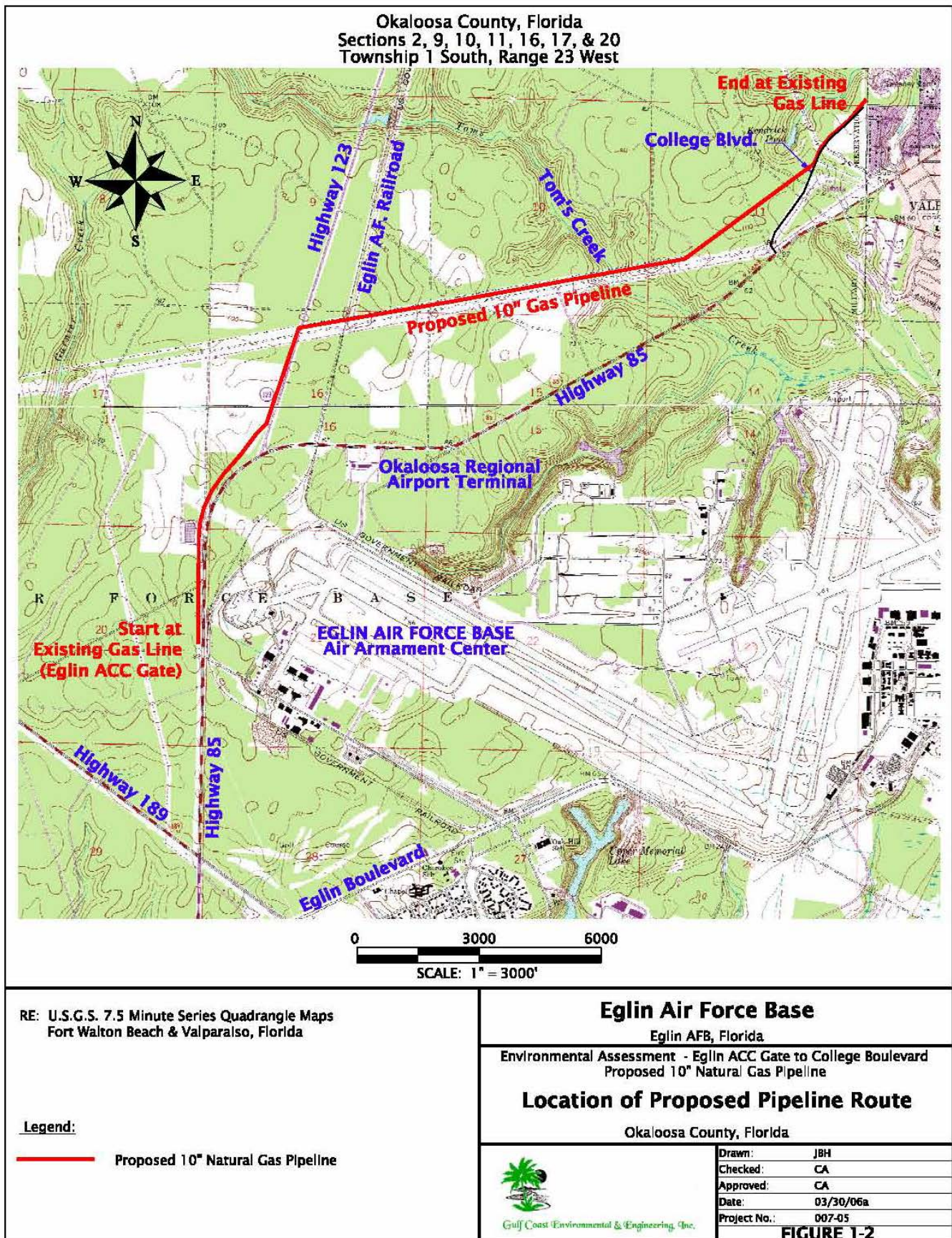
1.2 Location of the Proposed Action

Eglin AFB is an active military base located in Okaloosa, Walton, and Santa Rosa counties on the Florida Panhandle between Pensacola and Panama City as shown on Figure 1-1. It is the largest forested military reservation in the United States, covering approximately 464,000 acres (724 square miles) as well as 97,963 square miles of water test ranges. Most of the Eglin Reservation is undeveloped, with small pockets of developed and semi-developed areas.

Eglin belongs to the Air Force Material Command (AFMC), and the Air Armament Center (AAC) is the host unit. The AAC is responsible for development, acquisition, testing, deployment, and sustainment of all air-delivered weapons. Eglin has been a major employer in the area from the 1930's to the present day. In Fiscal Year 2004, Eglin AFB employed 8,854 military personnel and an additional 3,680 civilians.

The Proposed Action is located entirely within Eglin's military reservation. The location of the proposed 10" pipeline will commence on the west side of SR-85 at an existing thirty-foot (30') wide gas easement then north on the west side of SR-85 from the Eglin ACC Gate area along the west side of SR-85 and SR-123, then crossing SR-123 and continuing east along the north side of Eglin AFB's power line and terminating at Okaloosa Gas' existing 30' wide natural gas easement adjacent to College Boulevard, as shown on Figure 1-2. The easement for the proposed pipeline will be 30' wide and approximately 24,200 feet in length, equaling 16.66 acres, more or less (King, 2004b).





1.3 Decisions To Be Made

The Proposed Action is to install, operate, and maintain a 10” high-pressure natural gas pipeline along a route approximately 4.58 miles, located within Eglin AFB. The decision to be made is whether to allow the installation of the proposed pipeline based on a choice between the two alternatives presented in this EA, and, based on the analysis of the alternatives; determine if the impacts of the preferred alternative are significant.

1.4 Scope of Environmental Analysis

This EA has been prepared as part of the environmental impact analysis process (EIAP) in accordance with Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 32-70, Environmental Quality. AFPD 32-70 supercedes AFI 32-7061, dated 24 January 1995 and is the controlling document on the Air Force EIAP. It adopts the current Title 32, Code of Federal Regulations Part 989 (32 CFR Part 989) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508), and DoD Instruction 4715.9, Environmental Planning and Analysis.

NEPA requires federal agencies to take into consideration the potential environmental consequences of proposed actions in their decision-making process. The intent of NEPA is to protect, restore, and enhance the environment through well-informed federal decisions. CEQ was established under NEPA to implement and oversee federal policy in this process. The CEQ subsequently issued the Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500 to 1508) (CEQ 1978). These requirements specify that an EA be prepared to:

- Briefly provide sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).
- Aid in an agency’s compliance with NEPA when an EIS is not necessary.
- Facilitate preparation of an EIS when one is necessary.

The activities addressed within this document constitute a federal action and therefore must be assessed in accordance with NEPA. To comply with NEPA, as well as other pertinent environmental requirements, the decision-making process for the Proposed Action includes the development of this EA to address the environmental issues related to the proposed activities. The potential environmental effects associated with the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative were assessed for the following environmental resources: socio-economic conditions, land uses, environmental justice, air quality, noise, water resources, geology and soils, biological resources, cultural resources, coastal zone consistency, utilities and infrastructure, hazardous materials, and indirect and cumulative impacts. Cumulative effects resulting from the overlap of the Proposed Action with other planned activities and other reasonably foreseeable actions were also assessed.

1.5 Applicable Regulatory Requirements and Coordination

Environmental regulatory requirements relevant to the Proposed Action and alternatives are identified in this EA. Regulatory requirements under the following programs, among others, will be assessed: Clean Air Act (CAA); Clean Water Act (CWA); National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973; Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA); Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA); and Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA). Requirements also include compliance with Executive Order (EO) 11988, Floodplain Management; EO 11990, Protection of the Wetlands; and EO 12898, Environmental Justice.

Representatives from Okaloosa Gas met previously with Eglin's Encroachment Committee to review the Proposed Action and request an easement along SR-85, SR-123, Gulf Power easement and College Boulevard to allow installation of the natural gas pipeline. In correspondence dated 21 June 2004 from Mr. Robert J. Arnold, Chairman, Eglin AFB Encroachment Committee, the easement request was conceptually approved pending Okaloosa Gas meeting all requirements with the Eglin AFB Real Estate Officer and successfully completing the required environmental documentation. A copy of this correspondence is included in Appendix A.

For the Proposed Action, Okaloosa Gas will secure the normal right-of-way criteria for properties through the Florida Department Of Transportation (FDOT). Any additional requests for information and specific requirements related to the Proposed Action will be addressed and adhered to accordingly. Since the entirety of the proposed pipeline route is located on Eglin AFB, there are no non-governmental properties involved with the Proposed Action (Mitchell, 2004a).

On March 4, 2005, Okaloosa Gas submitted a Joint Application for Works in the Waters of Florida to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for agency review pursuant to Part IV, Chapter 373, Florida Statutes, for the Proposed Action. Okaloosa Gas will directionally bore the placement of the 10" gas pipeline beneath jurisdictional wetlands and Tom's Creek, originating and terminating in upland locations, to avoid any impacts to wetlands and to minimize any impacts to the creek. Based on the agency's review process and field verification, the FDEP determined that the Proposed Action is exempt from wetland resource permitting requirements under Rule 62-4.040(1)(b) of the Florida Administrative Code. A copy of the exemption determination from FDEP to Okaloosa Gas dated July 20, 2005 is included as Attachment B.

As specified in Rule 62-621.300(4), Florida Administrative Code, construction activity associated with the Proposed Action will require a Generic Permit for Storm Water Discharge from Construction Activities that Disturb One or More Acres of Land.

1.6 Public and Agency Involvement

Executive Order (EO) 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*, requires intergovernmental notifications prior to making any detailed statement of environmental impacts. Through the process of Interagency and Intergovernmental Coordination for Environmental Planning, the proponent must notify concerned federal, state, and local agencies and allow them

sufficient time to evaluate potential environmental impacts of a proposed action. Correspondence to all relevant federal, state and local agencies was initiated and their responses are included in appendices to this EA. There were no public comments received during the public review process for the Proposed Action.

A public notice was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on July 26, 2005 to disclose completion of the Draft EA, selection of the preferred alternative, and request comments during the 15-day pre-decisional comment period. The 15-day comment period ended on August 9, 2005, with any comments due to Eglin no later than August 12, 2005. No comments were received during this public review period. A copy of the public notice and memo dated August 22, 2005 from Eglin's Public Information Specialist are included in Appendix C (Public Review Process).

1.7 Organization of the EA

The EA is organized into seven sections and seven appendices. Section 1.0 contains a statement of the purpose and need for the Proposed Action; defines the location of the Proposed Action; states the decision to be made; presents the scope of the environmental review; and outlines the organization of the EA. Section 2.0 of the EA describes the Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative and identifies alternative actions eliminated from further consideration. Table 1 included in Section 2.0, presents a comparison of potential environmental consequences from the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Section 3.0 describes the existing environment of the project site at Eglin AFB. These descriptions provide a framework for assessing the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative discussed in Section 4.0. Section 5.0 identifies the individuals and agencies consulted in the preparation of the document. Section 6.0 lists the preparers of the EA. Section 7.0 is a list of sources and documents relevant to the preparation of this EA. Appendices contained in the EA include:

- Appendix A – Correspondence from Eglin AFB Encroachment Committee
- Appendix B – Permit Exemption from FDEP
- Appendix C – Public Review Process
- Appendix D – Biological Assessment
- Appendix E – Correspondence from State Historic Preservation Officer
- Appendix F – CZMA Consistency Determination
- Appendix G – Correspondence from Florida State Clearinghouse and Commenting Agencies

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 Introduction

This section describes the activities associated with the Proposed Action, No Action Alternative, alternatives considered but eliminated, and concludes with a comparison of environmental effects of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

2.2 Detailed Description of the Proposed Action

Okaloosa Gas proposes to install, operate and maintain a new 10" high-pressure natural gas pipeline along an approximately 4.58 mile corridor within Eglin AFB. Under the Proposed Action, the pipeline route would commence at the Eglin ACC Gate area, continue along the west side of SR-85 and SR-123, then cross SR-123 and run adjacent to the existing Gulf Power easement to terminate at College Boulevard where it will connect with an existing pipeline as shown on Figure 2-1.

Okaloosa Gas has requested an easement from Eglin's Encroachment Committee for the installation of the 10" gas pipeline which would connect with an existing gas pipeline on the west side of SR-85 across from Eglin's ACC Gate and terminate at College Boulevard where it would connect to another existing pipeline. The easement will be 30' wide, approximately 24,200 feet in length, and approximately 16.65 acres, more or less. The Proposed Action would be located entirely within Eglin's military reservation.

The easement would commence on the west side of SR-85 across from Eglin's ACC Gate going north, adjacent to, but not on FDOT's easement, up to General Bond Boulevard; continuing North on SR-85 adjacent to, but not on Okaloosa County Water and Sewer's (OCWS) 30' easement up to SR-123; continuing on SR-123 to the East/West Gulf Power easement adjacent to, but not on FDOT's easement. The easement would continue eastward, adjacent to, but not on the south side of the Gulf Power easement and approximately 10 feet north of Eglin power lines where it will follow the Gulf Power easement up to College Boulevard, following the right-of-way and then connect to a currently installed gas pipeline.

The Proposed Action would require minimal clearing activities to uplands for the pipeline installation. Clearing of vegetation includes removal of some sand pines and a few long-leaf pines, branches, undergrowth and a small number of trees. Although a 30' wide easement is being requested, Okaloosa Gas would perform minimal clearing and leave a buffer at the Eglin AFB spray field pond. Okaloosa Gas estimates the total area to be cleared at 9.15 acres. Of these, 1.7 acres are on the Gulf Power easement (Rhebi, 2005b).

Mr. Dennis M. Mitchell, QEP, conducted a wetland delineation along the route of the Proposed Action on November 22, 2004. The length and location of the proposed route has only two potential wet areas that could have been impacted by the Proposed Action. These wet areas were identified at Tom's Creek and a small area within the proposed route located approximately 1200 feet from the pipeline terminus on College Boulevard, which contains riprap for storm water drainage. The wet areas were later field verified during a follow up site inspection that

included Eglin environmental personnel, representatives of Okaloosa Gas, and Mr. Mitchell. The wet areas identified along the proposed pipeline route would be avoided by means of subterranean boring (Mitchell, 2005a). Additionally, the FDEP confirmed this concept and does not consider any wetlands to be impacted from the proposed pipeline installation. Figure 2-2 identifies the proposed directional boring for the Tom's Creek crossing to avoid impacts to the existing wetlands as shown on Figure 2-2. Figure 2-3 illustrates the proposed directional boring for the riprap areas to avoid impacts to the wet areas as shown on Figure 2-3.

The construction phase of the project will consist of trenching and backfilling for the pipeline installation. Specifically, a four to six-foot wide and four-foot deep trench will be dug for the pipeline to be placed in. The 10" pipe will be welded and inspected prior to installing in the trench. The pipe will be laid as the trench is dug, which will minimize the time that the trench remains open. Okaloosa Gas engineers anticipate installing up to 800 feet of pipe per day. The pipe will be placed in the excavated trench and backfilled with the same material. The nature of the construction involves relatively small quantities of excavation over the linear course of the pipeline route. The topsoil will be stockpiled separately and replaced to original contour upon completion of the installation activity. Restorative techniques of hay mulching and/or seeding/sodding will be used as appropriate. Historically, for similar type pipeline projects in the area and on Eglin AFB, native flora, both seasonal and evergreen, tend to easily recover. The soil characteristics lack distinct horizons, so what little blending of subsurface soil and topsoil is expected to have little, if any, measurable effect. No dewatering of the trench will be necessary for the Proposed Action.

Erosion from the trenching activity is expected to be minimal, as selected best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented throughout the entire work corridor, and because the trench will be backfilled as soon as the pipe is laid. During trenching operations, BMPs, including the use of temporary silt fences and staked turbidity and hay bale barriers will be used to control fugitive soil movements and to control any excessive rutting or sedimentation. These controls are standard industry measures of practice for erosion controls that both individually and collectively, control soil movement, erosion, and storm water runoff. These controls will be placed on both sides of the work area during construction activities.

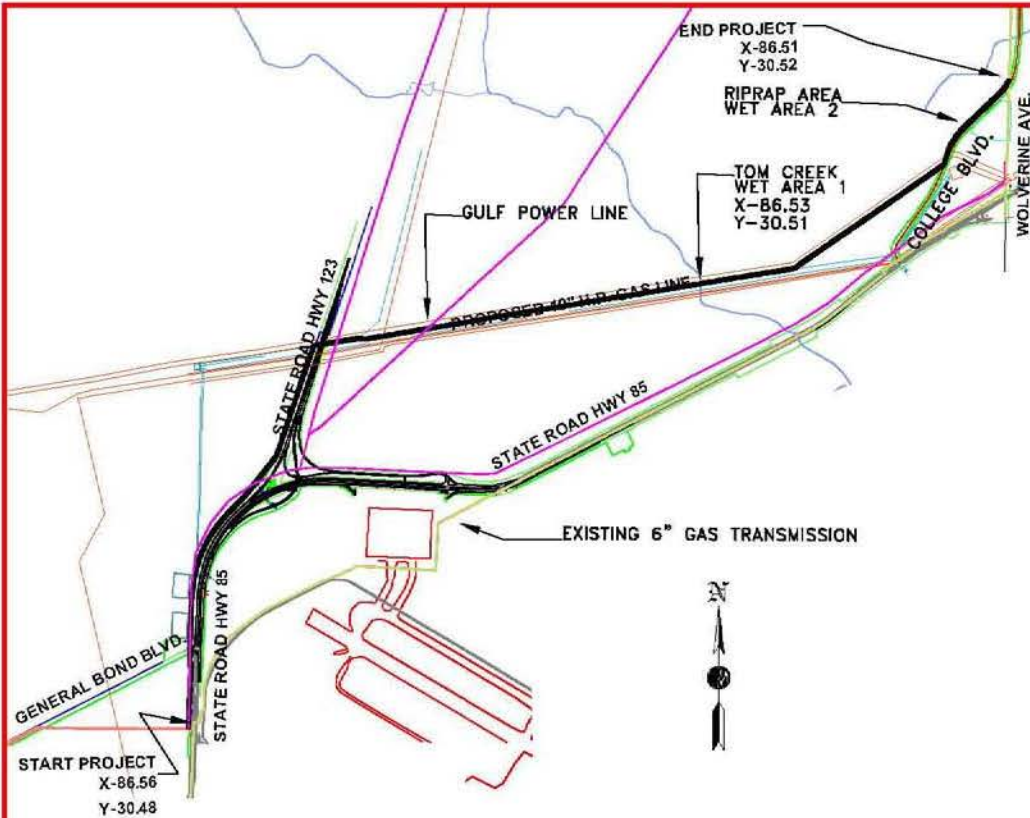


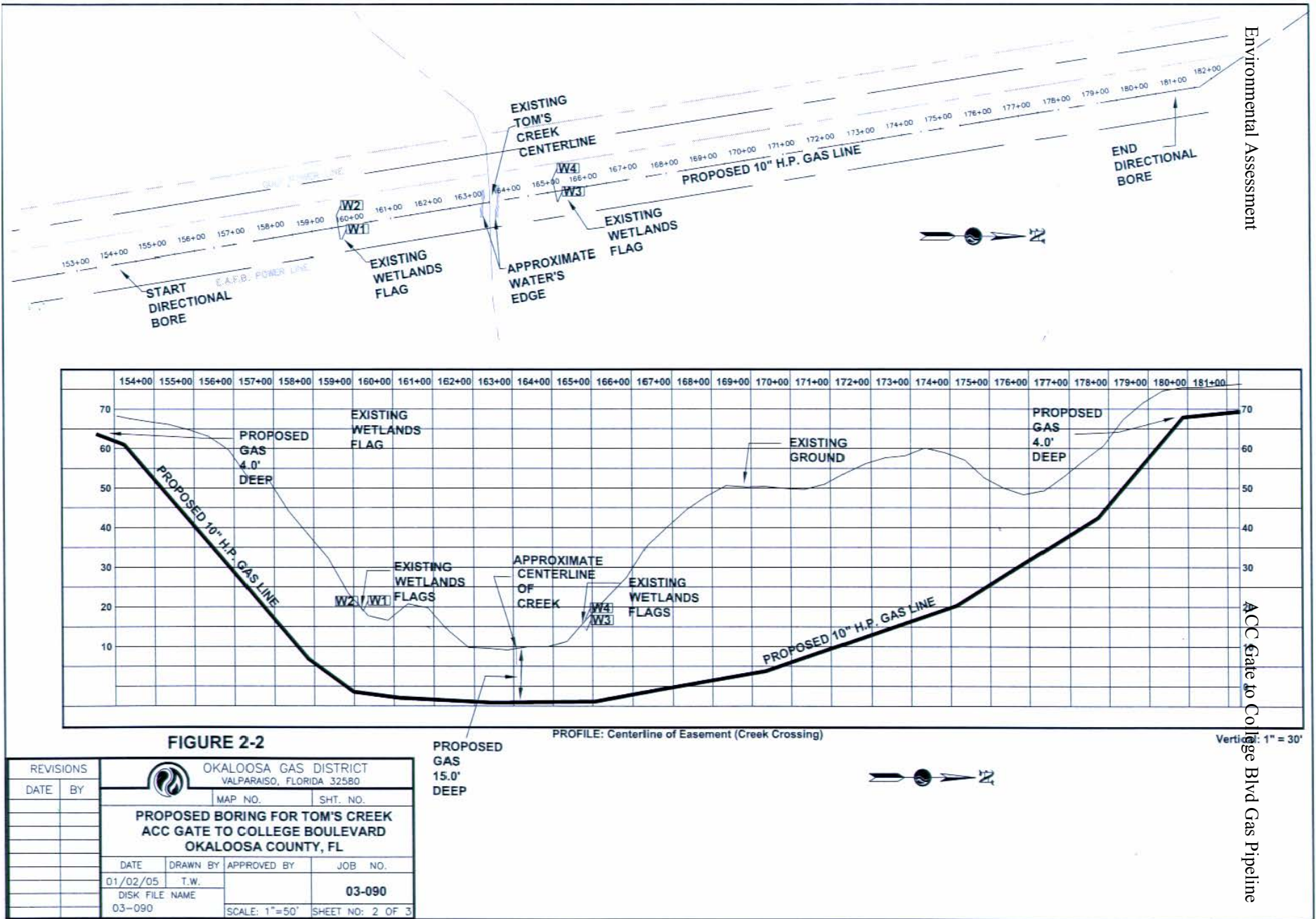
FIGURE 2-1

REVISIONS		OKALOOSA GAS DISTRICT VALPARAISO, FLORIDA 32580	
DATE	BY	MAP NO.	SHT. NO.
LOCATION OF PROPOSED 10" PIPELINE ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BOULEVARD OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL			
DATE	DRAWN BY	APPROVED BY	JOB NO.
01/02/05	T.W.		03-090
DISK FILE NAME			
03-090		SCALE: 1"=50' SHEET NO: 1 OF 3	

LEGAL

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: (AS SURVEYED AND WRITTEN)
PROPOSED 30' HIGH PRESSURE GAS LINE EASEMENT
A PARCEL OF LAND LYING IN SECTIONS 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 16,
17 AND 20, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 23 WEST,
OKALOOSA COUNTY FLORIDA BEING MORE
PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

COMMENCE AT A 4" X 4" CONCRETE MONUMENT, L.B.
3501 MARKING THE SOUTHEAST CORNER OF SECTION
20, TOWNSHIP 1 SOUTH, RANGE 23 WEST, OKALOOSA
COUNT, FLORIDA; THENCE GO N 00° 00' 00" E, A
DISTANCE OF 2332.63 FEET; THENCE GO N 90° 00' 00" W,
A DISTANCE OF 90.63' TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING OF
THE CENTERLINE OF A 30 FEET EASEMENT; THENCE
GO N 02° 25' 04" E, A DISTANCE OF 1245.94 FEET; THENCE
GO N 87° 34' 56" W, A DISTANCE OF 20.00'; THENCE GO N
02° 25' 04" E, A DISTANCE OF 253.89 FEET; THENCE GO N
01° 58' 19" W, A DISTANCE OF 363.91 FEET; THENCE GO N
02° 27' 20" E, A DISTANCE OF 749.79 FEET TO THE POINT
OF CURVATURE OF A CURVE CONCAVE
SOUTHEASTERLY AND HAVING A RADIUS OF 2648.46
FEET; THENCE GO ALONG THE ARC OF SAID CURVE
THROUGH A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 41° 15' 49", AN ARC
DISTANCE OF 1907.39 FEET (CHORD BEARING = N
23° 05' 15" E, CHORD = C = 1866.43 FEET) TO THE POINT OF
TANGENCY OF SAID CURVE; THENCE GO N 43° 43' 10" E,
A DISTANCE OF 449.63 FEET; THENCE GO N 47° 55' 48" E,
A DISTANCE OF 87.12 FEET; THENCE GO N 38° 01' 57" E, A
DISTANCE OF 1009.58 FEET; THENCE GO N 18° 36' 36" E, A
DISTANCE OF 2359.81 FEET; THENCE GO N 80° 49' 58" E, A
DISTANCE OF 868.16 FEET; THENCE GO N 88° 55' 37" E, A
DISTANCE OF 296.13 FEET; THENCE GO N 80° 45' 54" E, A
DISTANCE OF 8543.23 FEET; THENCE GO N 55° 19' 32" E, A
DISTANCE OF 3629.50 FEET; THENCE GO N 23° 58' 30" E, A
DISTANCE OF 564.87 FEET TO THE POINT OF
CURVATURE OF A CURVE CONCAVE SOUTHEASTERLY
AND HAVING A RADIUS OF 1210.92 FEET; THENCE GO
ALONG THE ARC OF SAID CURVE THROUGH A CENTRAL
ANGLE OF 22° 09' 23", AN ARC DISTANCE OF 468.27 FEET
(CHORD BEARING = N 35° 03' 11" E, CHORD = 465.35 FEET)
TO THE POINT OF TANGENCY OF SAID CURVE; THENCE
GO N 46° 07' 53" E, A DISTANCE OF 1051.50 FEET TO THE
POINT OF CURVATURE OF A CURVE CONCAVE
NORTHWESTERLY AND HAVING A RADIUS OF 889.93
FEET; THENCE GO ALONG THE ARC OF SAID CURVE
THROUGH A CENTRAL ANGLE OF 22° 39' 48" E, AN ARC
DISTANCE OF 352.01 FEET (CHORD BEARING = N
34° 47' 58" E, CHORD = 349.72 FEET) TO THE POINT OF
TERMINUS.



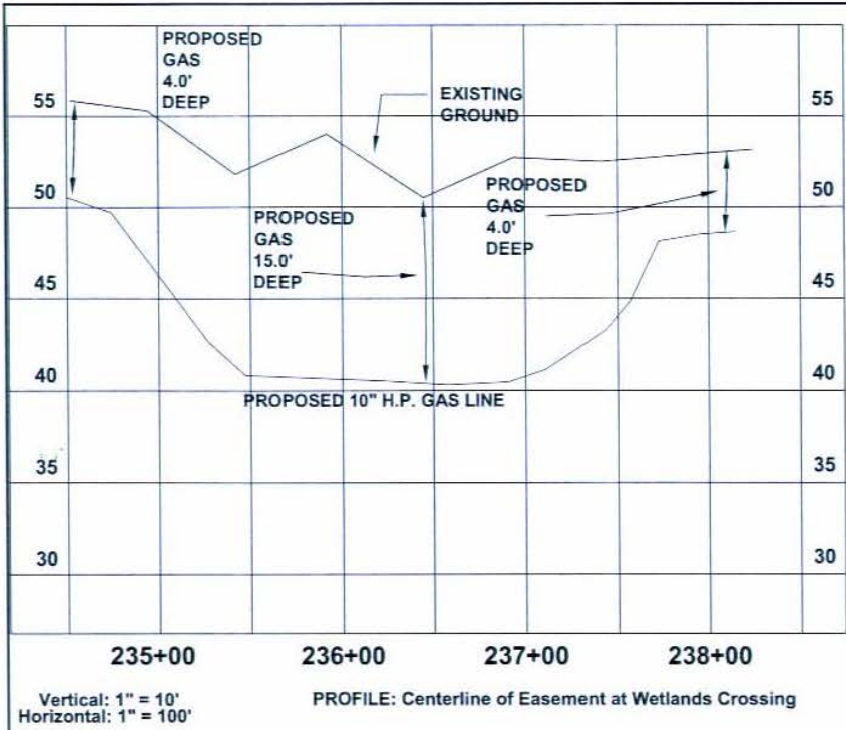

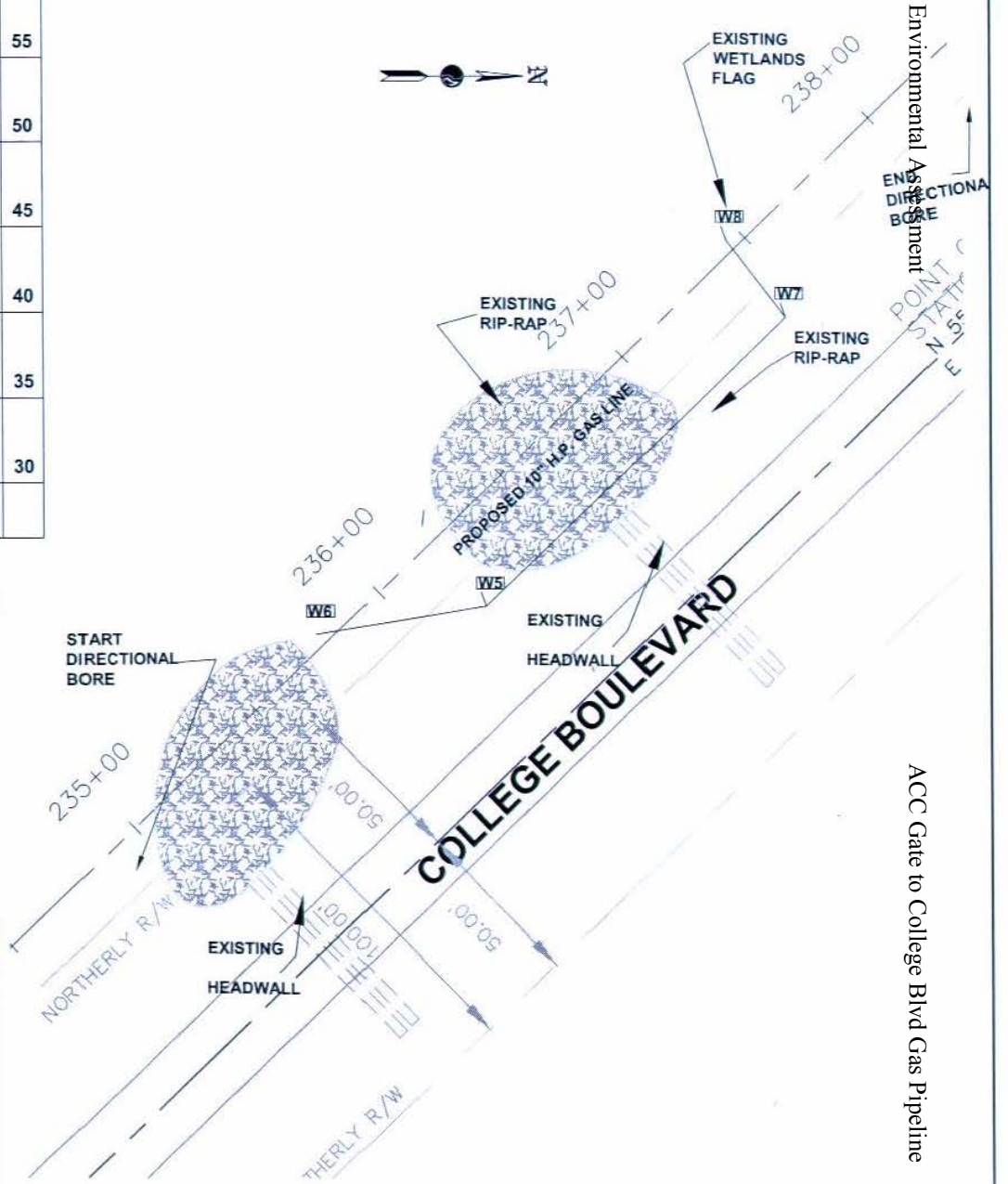


FIGURE 2-3

REVISIONS		 OKALOOSA GAS DISTRICT VALPARAISO, FLORIDA 32580			
DATE	BY	MAP NO.		SHT. NO.	
		PROPOSED BORING FOR RIPRAP AREA ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BOULEVARD OKALOOSA COUNTY, FL			
		DATE	DRAWN BY	APPROVED BY	JOB NO.
		01/02/05	T.W.		03-090
		DISK FILE NAME			
		03-090		SCALE: 1"=50'	SHEET NO: 3 OF 3



ACC Gate to College Blvd Gas Pipeline

2.3 Alternatives

2.3.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the 10" gas pipeline would not be built. This option is not preferred for several reasons. There is a need to decrease pressure on the existing 6" pipeline currently serving the area. The 6-inch line is safe, but undersized. It is limited on how much gas can safely go through it (capacity is limited by the size of the pipeline). This capacity limitation on the 6" pipeline is creating a "bottleneck effect" restricting gas flow and pressure between the north end and south end of the pipeline distribution loop. The looped system provides stability (multiple feeders), however, if there was an interruption on the system leaving only the 6" line in service, Eglin AFB could be adversely affected in total gas availability.

Okaloosa Gas endeavors to provide additional capacity to the Niceville, Valparaiso, and military facilities in the area, while maintaining the reliability and integrity of its transmission systems. The No Action Alternative would harm the ability of Okaloosa Gas to meet these objectives.

2.3.2 Identification of Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

Initially, three alternative options were considered for the pipeline route as shown on Figure 2-4. In considering these alternatives, Okaloosa Gas took into consideration National Homeland Security measures for pipeline safety; DOT's current 5-Year Plan regarding major construction scheduled in areas of the proposed routes, impact on the environment (i.e. avoidance of wetlands, least amount of clearing required, least amount of disturbance to natural resources, protection of species and habitats) and economics.

- Option 1, as shown on Figure 2-4, would follow SR-85 from the ACC Gate to College Boulevard entirely within the existing FDOT right-of-way. There would be sufficient easement to install the proposed pipeline adjacent to the FDOT highway, however it would require major clearing of standing flora, which is an integral part of an active Florida black bear habitat. It was also not practical for the 10" pipeline to parallel the location of the existing 6" pipeline since the 6" line goes underneath the tarmac of the Okaloosa Regional Airport. Option 1 would also be in conflict with activities contained in FDOT's 5-Year Plan regarding major construction scheduled for the area that could necessitate the relocation of the pipeline in future.
- Option 2, as shown on Figure 2-4, would follow SR-85 to SR-123 up to SR-85 within FDOT right-of-way. This option involved a much longer route requiring more footage (an additional 7100 feet), and would require several directional bores, resulting in an additional \$600,000 in cost. This route would cross two known Okaloosa darter streams, one non-darter stream and three major wet areas. Also, there is uncertainty if SR-123 will be four-laned in the future and the impacts that could possibly have on utilities.
- Option 3, as shown on Figure 2-4, would follow a route from SR-85 to the old Eglin railroad crossing, following the old Eglin railroad to SR-85. This proposed route would

necessitate the clearing of a large number of trees and would impact other environmentally sensitive areas. When this proposed option was discussed with the Eglin Encroachment Committee, their response was they did not want any activity in this area. Consequently, this option was dropped from any further consideration.

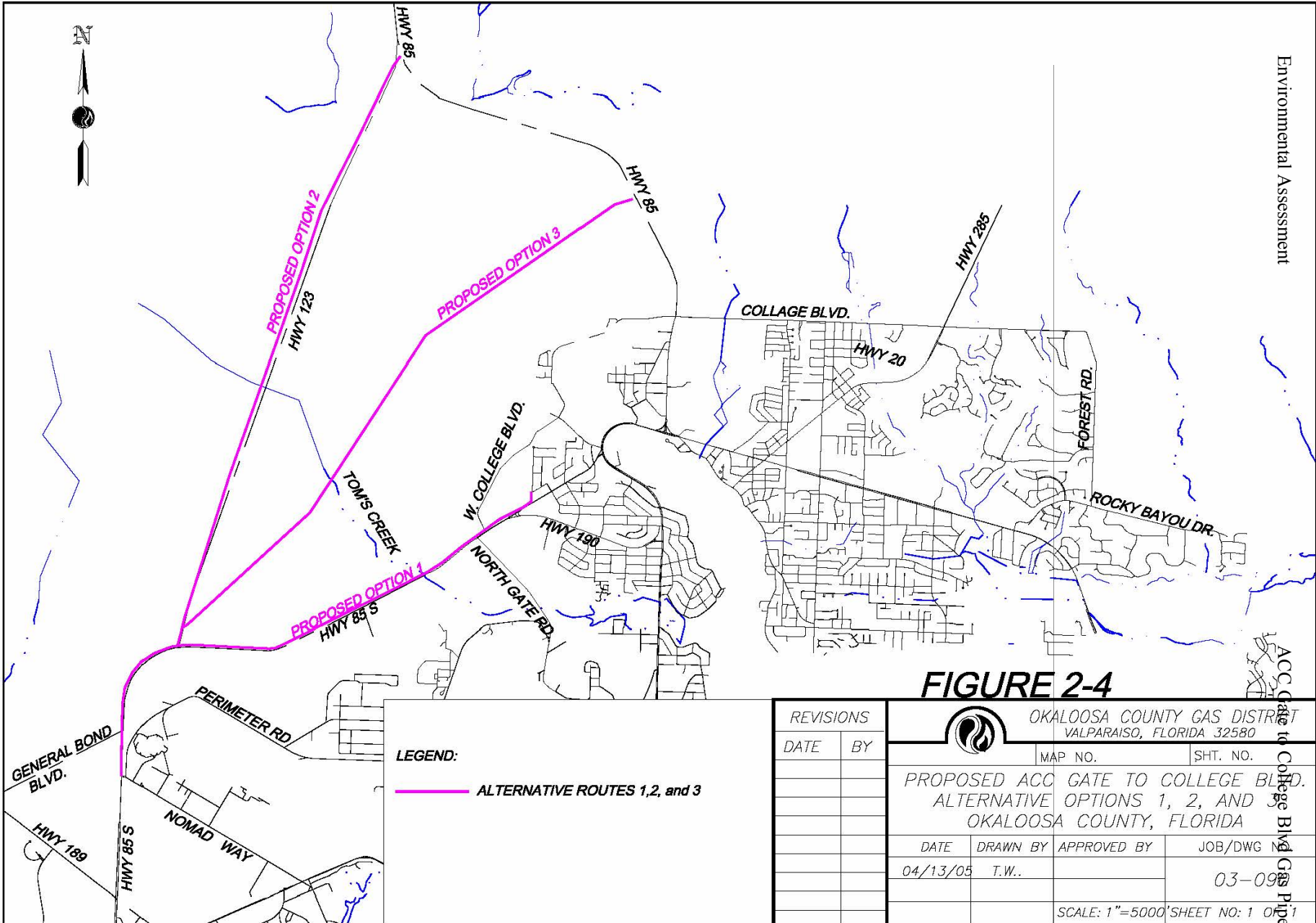
2.4 Identification of the Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative is the Proposed Action. This route was chosen considering increased national Homeland Security measures for gas pipelines and the usual safety concerns. The Proposed Action will also avoid any future conflicts with activities contained in FDOT's 5-Year Plan regarding major construction scheduled for the area. In addition, the paralleling existing power line and utility easements along the Proposed Action are already cleared and require only minimum maintenance. The cost involved to clear the alternative routes would be approximately \$100,000 (\$6,500 per acre) and would result in more disturbance and loss of species habitats and vegetation.

Due to the recent BRAC initiatives, Eglin AFB will be increasing personnel by approximately 6,000 military personnel (plus families) in the immediate future. Additionally, contract and construction non-military support personnel are expected to add approximately 10,000 more personnel. These factors, along with a projected increase in population growth for the Niceville/Valparaiso communities will create considerable new demand for natural gas usage for both Eglin AFB and the surrounding communities serviced by Okaloosa Gas.

The Proposed Action is the preferred alternative when compared to the three alternative options for the following reasons:

1. When compared with the three alternative options described above, the Proposed Action presented the least amount of environmental impacts (i.e., avoidance of wetlands, least amount of clearing required, least amount of disturbance to natural resources, and provided the best protection to species and habitats.
2. The Proposed Action was the least expensive for system-wide cost controls, and was the most secure and safe location because it is located on Eglin's right-of-way.
3. The Proposed Action did not involve substantial conflict with activities contained in FDOT's 5-Year Plan regarding major construction scheduled for the area.
4. The Proposed Action was conceptually approved by the Eglin Encroachment Committee. A copy of the correspondence from the Encroachment Committee dated June 21, 2004 to Okaloosa Gas is included in Appendix A.



2.5 COMPARISON MATRIX OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Table 1 presents a matrix of potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative.

COMPARISON MATRIX OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Environmental Resource Areas	TABLE 1	
	Proposed Action – Preferred Route	No Action Alternative
Geology and Soils	Short-term – Minor Adverse	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Air Quality	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Water Resources	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Biological Resources	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Noise	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Cultural Resources	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Land Use	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Environmental Justice	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts
Indirect and Cumulative Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts	Short-term – No Impacts
	Long-term – No Impacts	Long-term – No Impacts

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

This section presents information on environmental conditions for resources potentially affected by the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative described in Section 2.0. The environment includes all areas and lands that might be affected, as well as the cultural and natural resources they contain or support.

3.1 Socio-Economic Conditions

3.1.1 Land Use Patterns

Land use generally refers to human management and use of land. Specific uses of land typically include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, military, and recreational. Land use also includes areas set aside for preservation or protection of natural resources, wildlife habitat, vegetation, or unique features. Land use is described for the current use of Eglin AFB and for the Proposed Action within Okaloosa County.

Site

The Proposed Action would be located entirely within Eglin's military reservation (federally owned lands). The Eglin Reservation, as it is called, is the largest forested military reservation in the United States. Its land area covers approximately 724 square miles or approximately 464,000 acres of predominately pine forest, with more than 50 specific test areas and sites (U.S. Air Force, 2001). Most of the Eglin reservation is undeveloped land with small pockets of developed and semi-developed areas. Since 1935 it has been the Air Force's primary munitions testing and training facility. Eglin Main Base is the largest developed complex on the reservation. It is located in the south central portion of Eglin Reservation. The major land uses on Eglin Main Base include airfield and aircraft operations and maintenance (approximately 2,362 acres), industrial land use in nine separate areas (2,057 acres), open space (4,141 acres) and residential (over 1,000 acres). Hurlburt Field is located approximately 11 miles west of Eglin Main Base. Duke Field and Camp Rudder are smaller areas within the Reservation.

Several plans and programs guide land use planning on Eglin AFB. The Eglin AFB Land Use Plan component of the Base Comprehensive Plan describes a comprehensive planning strategy to support the military missions assigned to the installation. The Plan provides general information regarding the installation and describes existing land uses, a planning analysis of constraints and opportunities, future land use, and implementation guidelines (U.S. Air Force, 2001).

For the Proposed Action, the pipeline route would commence at the Eglin ACC Gate area, continue along the west side of SR-85 and SR-123, then cross SR-123 and run adjacent to the existing Gulf Power easement and terminate at College Boulevard, as shown on Figure 1-2. The region of influence for land use impacts of the Proposed Action are the open areas associated with Eglin Reservation located in Sections 2, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, and 20, Township 1 South, Range 23 West, Okaloosa County as shown on Figure 3-1. The Proposed Action will intersect Tom's Creek in Valparaiso, in the north end of the route.

Approximately 65% (280,000 acres) of Eglin's 464,000-acre reservation is open to the general public for outdoor recreation (U.S. Air Force, 2000). Areas that have been determined to contain a known potential for unexploded ordnance (UXO) are closed to the public. The sections of the reservation that are restricted to all forms of public access are clearly posted with "Do Not Enter" signs and are marked in red on the Outdoor Reservation, Hunting, and Fresh Water Fishing Map (U.S. Air Force, 2000). Since the Proposed Action reaches into the Reservation, Range Safety was consulted regarding UXO. The Proposed Action does not occur in an area of known or probable UXO contamination.

Surrounding Area

A combination of commercial, residential, and undeveloped land surrounds Eglin AFB. The Main Base area of Eglin AFB is bordered on the west by the cities of Fort Walton Beach, Shalimar, Mary Esther, and Cinco Bayou, and on the east by Valparaiso and Niceville. Local development has been guided by careful planning and zoning, assuring compatibility with Air Force operations while meeting the needs of the general community. Eglin AFB works closely with the local county officials to ensure that development on and around the base is compatible and appropriate.

3.1.2 Environmental Justice / Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks

The President issued Executive Order (EO) 12898, Environmental Justice, on February 11, 1994. Objectives of the EO, as it pertains to this EA, include development of federal agency implementation strategies, identification of minority and low-income populations where proposed federal actions have disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, and participation of minority and low-income populations. Accompanying EO 12898 was a Presidential Memorandum that referenced existing federal statutes and regulation to be used in conjunction with EO 12898. The memorandum addressed the use of the policies and procedures of the NEPA. Specifically, the memorandum indicates that, "each Federal agency shall analyze the environmental effects, including human health, economic and social effects of Federal actions, including effects on minority communities and low-income communities, when such analysis is required by the NEPA 42 U.S.C. section 4321, et seq."

EO 12898 provides no guidelines as to how to determine concentrations of minority or low-income populations. It requires Federal agencies to consider disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. The "Guide for Environmental Justice Analysis with the EIAP" dated November 1997 was developed by the Air Force to give guidance in conducting environmental justice analyses. The 2000 U.S. Census provides the basis for analyzing the demographic composition of the area potentially affected from the Proposed Action in Okaloosa County.

Additionally, Executive Order 13045, *Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks*, mandates that all federal agencies identify and assess environmental health and safety risks that

may affect children as a result of the implementation of Federal policies, programs, activities, and standards (65 CFR 19883-19888).

A public park (Wolverine Girls Softball Complex) is located across the road from the proposed pipeline terminus at College Boulevard (approximately 150-200 yards east of College Boulevard on Wolverine Boulevard). The objective of EO 13045, as it pertains to the Proposed Action, would be to assess the potential of environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children as a result of implementing the Proposed Action.

3.2 Physical/Biological Resources

3.2.1 Air Quality

Air quality is a result of the local climate and the presence of air pollutants. In response to the Clean Air Act of 1970 (CAA) and its amendments, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has established National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for criteria air pollutants, which include carbon monoxide, ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and particulate matter equal to or less than 10 microns in size (PM₁₀). Air quality in any given region is measured by the concentration of various pollutants in the atmosphere, typically expressed in units of parts per million (ppm) or micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m³). Air quality is determined not only by the types and quantities of atmospheric pollutants but also by surface topography, the size of the air basin, and by the prevailing meteorological conditions.

Because Eglin AFB is located near the Gulf of Mexico, regional air circulation patterns provide good ventilation and prevent the buildup of pollutants. The climate is characterized as warm, temperate, and humid. Warm weather temperatures average about 85 degrees Fahrenheit, while winters average about 57 degrees. The areas surrounding Eglin AFB are not highly industrialized. Thus, the air quality is generally good and significant air pollution episodes have not occurred.

The USEPA classifies the air quality within an air quality control region (AQCR) according to whether or not the concentrations of criteria air pollutants in the atmosphere exceed primary or secondary NAAQS. The USEPA established both primary and secondary NAAQS under provisions of the CAA. Primary standards define levels of air quality necessary to protect public health with an adequate margin of safety. Secondary standards define levels of air quality necessary to protect public welfare (i.e., soils, vegetation, property, and wildlife) from any known or anticipated adverse effects. All areas within each AQCR are assigned a designation of attainment, nonattainment, unclassifiable attainment, or not designated attainment for each criteria air pollutant. An attainment designation indicates that the air quality within an area is as good as or better than the NAAQS. Nonattainment indicates that air quality within a specific geographic area exceeds applicable NAAQS. Unclassifiable and not designated indicates that the air quality cannot be or has not been classified on the basis of available information as meeting or not meeting the NAAQS and is treated as attainment.

The Proposed Action is located in Okaloosa County within the Mobile-Pensacola-Panama City-Southern Florida Interstate AQCR5. The AQCR covers a three-state region and includes the Alabama counties of Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile; the Florida counties of Bay, Calhoun,

Escambia, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington; and the Mississippi counties of Adams, Amite, Clairborne, Clarke, Copiah, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Green, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Lincoln, Madison, Marion, Newton, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Walthall, Warren, Wayne, and Wilkinson.

The USEPA has designated the area of the Proposed Action as an “attainment area” where air pollution levels are below the minimum limits set by the USEPA for the six criteria pollutants. These pollutants include nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, PM₁₀, lead and ozone.

3.2.2 Noise Levels

Noise is considered to be unwanted sound that interferes with normal activities or otherwise diminishes the quality of the environment. Noise sensitive receptors are generally considered to be human activities or land uses that may be subject to the stress of significant interference from noise. The unit used to measure the intensity of sound is the decibel (dB). When describing sound and its effect on a human population, A-weighted (dBA) sound levels are typically used to account for the response of the human ear. The A-weighted noise level has been found to correlate well with people’s judgments of the noisiness of different sounds and has been used for many years as a measure of community noise. Typically, the maximum allowable noise level for a sensitive receptor is 65 dBA. Land use associated with sensitive receptors includes residential dwellings, mobile homes, hotels, motels, hospitals, nursing homes, education facilities, and libraries. Sensitive receptors may also include threatened or endangered noise-sensitive biological species. Commercial, office, and industrial land uses are not considered “noise-sensitive” by most definitions.

Noise associated with activities at Eglin AFB is characteristic of that associated with most Air Force installations with a flying and test mission. The Proposed Action would be located along the southern portion of the military reservation. The dominant noise sources at the site of the Proposed Action and environs are associated with military aircraft and airbase operations and vehicle traffic from the adjacent roadways of Highway 85 and State Road 123. Noise in the Proposed Action area is typical of military installations and state highways and is within federal and state regulatory criteria.

3.2.3 Water Resources

Water resources include both surface and subsurface water. Surface water includes all lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, impoundments, and wetlands within a defined area or watershed. Subsurface water, commonly referred to as groundwater, typically is found in certain areas known as aquifers. Aquifers are areas of mostly high porosity soil where water can be stored between soil particles and within soil pore spaces. Groundwater is usually recharged during rain events and is withdrawn for domestic, agricultural, and industrial purposes. The CWA is the primary Federal law that protects the nation’s waters, including lakes, rivers, aquifers, and coastal areas. The primary objective of the CWA is to restore and maintain the integrity of the nation’s waters.

Water resources analyzed in this section include the watersheds, aquifers, and wetlands associated with Eglin occurring along the route of the Proposed Action.

3.2.3.1 Surface Waters

Maps from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) indicate that Eglin AFB has an abundance of rivers, seeps, and springs that form hundreds of small streams and larger drainage areas on the Reservation. Surface waters associated with the Proposed Action include Tom's Creek. The Proposed Action will intersect Tom's Creek, located in Valparaiso, at the north end of the route (see Figure 1-2). Tom's Creek drains directly into Tom's Bayou. Tom's Bayou, also located in Valparaiso, is used for various recreational activities (e.g., fishing, swimming and boating). Both water bodies are classified as Class III Waters of the State. The Proposed Action occurs within the Turkey Creek drainage basin.

3.2.3.2 Wetlands

The purpose of Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands, is to "minimize the destruction, loss or degradation of wetlands and to preserve and enhance the natural and beneficial values of wetlands". To meet these objectives, the EO requires federal agencies, to consider alternatives to wetlands sites and limit potential damage if an activity affecting a wetland cannot be avoided.

Wetlands are defined as "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions" (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1987). Areas that are periodically wet but do not meet all three criteria (hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology) are not jurisdictional wetlands subject to Section 404 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (CWA). Areas that have been disturbed or are classified as problem area wetlands, however, may not meet all three criteria as a result of natural or man-induced reasons; yet they are still considered wetlands.

The length and location of the proposed route has only two potential wet areas that could have been impacted by the Proposed Action. These wet areas were identified at Tom's Creek and a small area within the proposed route located approximately 1200 feet from the pipeline terminus on College Boulevard, which contains riprap for storm water drainage.

Wetlands identified in the general wet area around Tom's Creek represent a fen type (Mitchell, 2004a). Drainage from the sandy steeps (slopes) surrounding the creek facilitates a relatively high organic collection in the bottoms as well as a (usually) continuous flow such that the pH is moderate to less than sharply acidic (Mitchell, 200a). The second wet area was located near the terminal end of the Proposed Action on College Boulevard. A scrub-shrub type wet area was identified between the two riprap storm water drainage control devices for the adjacent roadway.

Okaloosa Gas will utilize subterranean boring for installing the pipe beneath both Tom's Creek and under the immediate creek bed wet area to avoid any surface disturbance or impacts to wetlands or the Okaloosa darter. Subterranean directional boring would also be employed under

the two riprap storm water drainage controls on College Boulevard to avoid any impacts to the wet areas in that location.

3.2.3.3 Groundwater

Eglin is underlain by a surficial sand and gravel aquifer and the Floridan aquifer. These are the two principle aquifers that serve the region. The top of the Floridan aquifer lies 500 to 600 feet below Mean Sea Level (MSL), and it averages more than 1,000 feet in thickness. The Floridan aquifer is composed mostly of a thick sequence of interbedded limestones and dolomites. The great thickness and low permeability of the Pensacola clay that lies between the sand and gravel aquifer and the Floridan Aquifer, helps protect the Floridan aquifer from any contaminants associated with direct recharge and from surface contamination sources. Also, there is a clay layer that acts as a confining bed to separate the aquifer into upper and lower limestone units. Rainfall that falls on the local land surface rapidly infiltrates the soil profile to recharge the shallow groundwater. The stored groundwater is released slowly to the surface water. Groundwater flow is generally toward the south-southeast in the direction of major water bodies of water, such as Choctawhatchee Bay and the Santa Rosa Sound.

The main water supply source at Eglin AFB is from the upper Floridan aquifer. The Floridan aquifer supplies most of the water needs in Okaloosa and Walton counties as well.

Since natural gas is lighter than air, there is no danger of any impacts to groundwater resources in the unlikely event of a pipeline leak. The pipeline would be installed, tested, and maintained in accordance with United States Department of Transportation Pipeline Safety regulations (CFR 49 Parts 186-199) and in accordance with the Florida Public Service Commission pipeline safety regulations. Leak detection surveys are conducted by law (in accordance with the regulations) on a required basis.

3.2.3.4 Floodplains

Executive Order 11988, Floodplains Management, directs government agencies to avoid adverse effects and incompatible development in floodplains unless there is no practicable alternative. If construction is unavoidable, then agencies must ensure the action conforms to applicable floodplain protection standards, and that flood protection measures are applied to the construction.

Floodplains are described as lowland areas adjacent to surface water bodies (i.e., lakes, wetlands, and rivers) that are periodically covered by water during flooding events. Floodplains are identified using federal flood hazard mapping data. Based on mapping data available from the FDEP, regions of the 100-year floodplain are extensive on Eglin AFB, however, the route of the Proposed Action does not occur in a floodplain area.

3.2.4 Geology, Soils, Topography

Much of the Eglin reservation is underlain by noncohesive sandy sediments that were deposited by marine processes during Tertiary and Quaternary times. The materials occurring at the surface are relatively clean sands classified as Lakeland Series soils (found on up to 78 percent

of the reservation). According to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (1989), the predominate upland soils along the Proposed Action consist of Lakeland fine to medium sandy soils, 0 to 5 percent slopes, which is excessively drained, sandy throughout, and nearly level to gently sloping. This soil has low organic matter content, with rapid permeability and little runoff. Soil properties and features generally are favorable for use as building sites, local roads, and septic tank absorption fields. These gray to yellowish-brown sandy soils typically extend to depth of about one meter or more and overlie reddish Citronelle Formation sandy loam clay soils (Soil Survey of Okaloosa County, Florida 1990).

Terrain throughout Eglin AFB is generally rolling, and elevations range from sea level along portions of the southern coastal boundary to a maximum elevation of approximately 91 meters (300 ft) along the northeastern boundary. The route of the proposed project area is primarily comprised of upland habitat. The terrain within the Proposed Action is relatively level with an elevation of approximately 200 feet above MSL (U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), 1992), except for the sandy slopes along Tom's Creek. The Proposed Action occurs within the Turkey Creek Drainage Basin (Mitchell, 2004b).

3.2.5 Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

Biological resources include the native and introduced terrestrial plants and animals found on and around Eglin AFB. The terrestrial habitats of Eglin AFB are home to unusually diverse biological community including several sensitive species and/or unique habitats. This diversity is a result of the long history of natural resource-related activity that has changed the character of its native biota (U.S. Air Force, 2003a). Widespread logging activities and wildfire suppression combined with reforestation efforts using slash and sand pine changed the forested character of Eglin lands, which were historically covered by longleaf pine. However, much of Eglin remains in a relatively natural condition (U.S. Air Force 2003a).

Eglin contains a mixture of upland and wetland vegetative communities including cypress-gum swamps, bay swamps, pine flatwoods, sandhill, sand pine scrub, scrub-shrub wetlands, herbaceous wetlands, maritime hammock, open grassland, and some disturbed plant communities. Eglin ascribes a classification system of ecological associations to all its lands, based on floral, faunal, and geophysical characteristics. These ecological associations are describe in the *Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan*, Eglin AFB, 2002-2006 (U.S. Air Force, 2002) and the *Environmental Baseline Study Resource Appendices* (U.S. Air Force, 2003a). Five ecological associations occur throughout the Eglin Land Test and Training Range: the Sandhills ecological association, the Flatwoods ecological association, the Wetland/Riparian ecological association, the Open Grassland/Shrubland ecological association, and the Barrier Island ecological association. The Sandhills ecological association characterizes the largest extent of Eglin AFB land base, approximately 78 percent (U.S. Air Force, 2003a). Natural communities found along the Proposed Action corridor are primarily those typical of the Sandhills ecological association. Vegetative groundcover consists of various species of grasses, herbs and low shrubs. There are no federally listed plant species or plants of special concern that would be impacted by the Proposed Action. Along the route of the Proposed Action, there are areas of mixed oak with slash pine, and scattered longleaf pine (Mitchell 2004a). The Proposed Action requires minimal vegetative clearing to uplands along the proposed 30' easement consisting of branches and an occasional sand pine. The few trees that will require removal will

be cut and stacked by Okaloosa Gas in accordance with previous acceptable practices approved by Eglin Natural Resources. The removal of the cut trees will be at the discretion of Eglin Natural Resources Section. Okaloosa Gas estimated the total area to be cleared at 9.15 acres. Of this total, 1.7 acres is on the Gulf Power easement (Rhebi 2005b).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) lists species that are endangered or threatened and those that are proposed for endangered or threatened status. An endangered species is defined as any species in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. A threatened species is one that is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. Eglin AFB contains habitats utilized by a large number of federally and state-listed species.

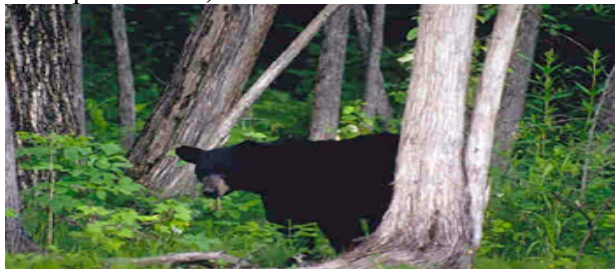
A Federal listed and state listed threatened and endangered species inhabit the project area. The federally listed endangered species, the Okaloosa darter, is known or has potential to occur within the area of the Proposed Action (Poirier, 2005). The Okaloosa darter (*Etheostoma okaloosae*) occurs in six stream systems flowing from Eglin AFB through or near the cities of Niceville and Valparaiso into Boggy and Rocky bayous on Choctawhatchee Bay, in Okaloosa and Walton counties.



Okaloosa darter

Inhabited streams are the main stems and tributaries of Tom's, Turkey, Mill, Swift, East Turkey, and Rocky creeks. These streams are small to moderate in size (4-40 feet) with clear, flowing water that fluctuates only minimally in temperature. Preferred habitat includes streams that have sheltered areas and debris. The USFWS listed the Okaloosa darter as endangered in 1973 due to its extreme limited range, habitat degradation, and apparent competition from a possibly introduced related species, the brown darter. Eglin has implemented habitat conservation measures and the Okaloosa darter populations have apparently stabilized. The Proposed Action will intersect Tom's Creek, an Okaloosa darter stream.

The Florida black bear, *Ursus americanus floridanus*, is also potentially present within the area of the Proposed Action. The Florida black bear currently has no federal status, however, is protected by the state and is state listed as threatened. They are known to seek large undisturbed forest tracts. The preferred forest types are pine flatwoods, hardwood swamp, cypress swamp, sand pine scrub, and mixed hardwood hammock.



Florida black bear

Historically, black bears probably occurred in every state in the continental United States, as well as Canada and Mexico. Decline of the black bear throughout North America can be directly correlated to the disappearance of suitable habitat. Poaching and the loss of bears to vehicles are second in concern to habitat destruction. The hunting of Florida black bears was banned in 1994. Although the range of the Florida black bear is widespread throughout the state of Florida, the species population has been reduced and fragmented.

In October 1994, a four-year study was initiated to investigate the population dynamics and ecology of the black bears on Eglin AFB. Major objectives of the project were to estimate density and distribution, delineate preferred habitat, and determine activity and movement patterns. Although ideal black bear habitat exists along the west side of SR-85, the easement corridor of the Proposed Action is not considered to be ideal habitat due to the proximity of the state road.

Personnel with Eglin's Natural Resources Section have completed a Section 7 consultation under the Endangered Species Act. Copies of the Biological Assessment and USFWS concurrence letter are provided in Appendix D of this EA.

3.2.6 Utilities/Infrastructure

This section discusses utilities serving the existing and proposed project area, which includes water supply, wastewater treatment, electricity, and natural gas.

3.2.6.1 Utilities

The Floridan Aquifer supplies most of the water needs in Okaloosa County, including Eglin AFB. Surface water sources are not currently used by water suppliers. Areas on Eglin Main Base are serviced by Eglin's water supply systems.

The Gulf Power Company supplies electricity to all of Santa Rosa County and much of Okaloosa County, including the cities of Fort Walton Beach, Cinco Bayou, Destin, Mary Esther, Shalimar, Crestview, Niceville, and Valparaiso. Okaloosa Gas supplies natural gas to most of Okaloosa County, including Fort Walton Beach, Cinco Bayou, Destin, Mary Esther, Niceville, Okaloosa Island, Shalimar, Valparaiso, Eglin, and unincorporated areas. The Proposed Action would provide additional natural gas capacity to the Niceville, Valparaiso and Eglin AFB areas while allowing for a decrease in pressure on Okaloosa Gas' existing 6" pipeline in the area of the Proposed Action.

Wastewater is processed at two wastewater treatment systems that service the Eglin Main Base. These facilities are operated by Eglin and are known as the Eglin Main Base Treatment Facility and Plew Heights Treatment Facility. Discharge from all sewage plants at Eglin AFB is regulated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and is closely monitored by both USEPA and Eglin to ensure continued compliance with applicable environmental laws and regulations. The Proposed Action would have no effect on Eglin's sewage treatment and disposal systems.

3.2.6.2 Transportation Infrastructure

The key transportation facilities associated with the area of the Proposed Action include portions of SR-85 and SR-123. SR-85 is a four-lane divided rural arterial connecting Fort Walton Beach and Shalimar on the South, to Valparaiso, Niceville, and other points north. SR-123 is a two-lane rural arterial, which intersects SR-85 in a T-intersection about 1800 feet west of the entrance to the Okaloosa Regional Airport. The intersection of these two roadways is north and east of the Eglin West Gate. The FDOT classifies SR-123 as a Minor Arterial and SR-85 as a Principle Arterial. The Proposed Action is contained entirely within Eglin AFB property and would not have an impact on transportation.

Future transportation improvements for SR-85 and SR-123 include the proposed SR-85/SR-123 flyover anticipated to be built within the next five to seven years. According to Okaloosa Gas, the Proposed Action has been designed in conjunction with the FDOT proposed project. Okaloosa Gas engineers are aware of FDOT's design for the proposed project and state that there will not be a conflict with the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action will be outside of the FDOT right-of-way (Rhebi, 2005b).

3.2.7 Hazardous Materials

The terms "hazardous materials" and "hazardous waste" refer to substances defined as hazardous by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act and the Solid Waste Disposal Act, as amended by the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. In general, hazardous materials include substances that, because of their quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics, may present a threat to public health or the environment when released into the environment.

The majority of hazardous materials used by Air Force and contractor personnel at Eglin AFB are controlled in accordance with AFI 32-7086, *Hazardous Materials Management*. The AFI established the requirements for the procurement, handling, storage, and issuing of hazardous materials and the redistribution/reuse of hazardous materials. The hazardous materials authorization process includes review and approval by Air Force personnel to ensure Air Force users are aware of exposure and safety risks. For the activities associated with the Proposed Action, there are no identified materials of a hazardous nature associated with the installation, maintenance or operation of the proposed pipeline or with the current operation and maintenance of existing natural gas pipelines operated by Okaloosa Gas that traverse the military reservation. Mr. Richard McKern of the Eglin Weapons Safety Office (AAC/SEOW) has confirmed that the easement is not in a known or probable explosive contaminated area.

3.3 Cultural Resources

Numerous Federal laws including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) require the protection and management of cultural resources. Of particular interest to military installations are sections 106 and 110 of NHPA. Section 106 provides direction for Federal agencies for undertakings that affect properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of

Historic Places (NRHP). Section 110 requires federal agencies to locate, inventory, and nominate all properties that may qualify for the NRHP.

Cultural resources consist of prehistoric and historic districts, sites, structures, artifacts, and any other physical evidence of human activity considered important to a culture or community for scientific, traditional, religious, or other reasons. They include archaeological resources (both prehistoric and historic), historic architectural resources, and traditional cultural resources. Historic properties (as defined in 36 CFR 60.4) are considered for potential adverse impacts from an action. Historic properties are significant archaeological, architectural, or traditional resources that are either eligible for listing, or listed on, the NRHP. Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Eglin AFB is required to consider the effects of its undertakings on historic properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register.

3.3.1 Archaeology and Historical Preservation

Archaeological resources (prehistoric and historic) are locations where human activity measurably altered the earth or left deposits of physical remains (e.g., tools, arrowheads, or bottles). “Prehistoric” refers to resources that predate the advent of written records in a region. “Historic” refers to resources that postdate the advent of written records in a region.

More than 1800 archaeological sites have been identified on Eglin AFB. Approximately 300 sites are eligible or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register. These historic properties must be considered during the planning and execution of any Federal undertaking that has the potential to affect them. Eglin developed a plan to prioritize the inventory and evaluation of its 464,000 acres of land, which includes approximately 724 square miles in parts of four counties. Eglin’s Cultural Resources is in the process of developing a new predictive model, which will depict constraint and constraint free areas.

To determine if there was possible adverse impact to cultural resources (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure or object) an archaeological survey was completed for the area along the route of the Proposed Action. No cultural resources were identified during this effort and it was concluded that the planned activities would have no effect on cultural resources. Appendix E contains correspondence from the State Historic Preservation Officer dated May 19, 2005 concurring with this determination for the Proposed Action.

3.4 Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)

The entire state of Florida is defined as being within the coastal zone; thus, any Federal activity in or affecting a coastal zone in Florida requires preparation of a Coastal Zone Consistency Determination in accordance with the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA). The act was passed to preserve, protect, develop, and (where possible) restore or enhance the nation’s natural coastal zone resources. The term “coastal zone” is defined as coastal waters and adjacent shorelands strongly influenced by each other and in proximity to the several coastal states, including islands, transitional and intertidal areas, salt marshes, wetlands, and beaches. “Coastal waters” are defined as any waters adjacent to the shoreline that contain a measurable amount of sea water, including but not limited to sounds, bays, lagoons, bayous, ponds, and

estuaries. The outer boundary of the coastal zone is the limit of state waters, which for the Gulf coast of Florida is nine (9) nautical miles from shore.

Since the Proposed Action is located within the state of Florida's designated coastal zone, a CZMA consistency determination was prepared by Eglin's Natural Resources Section addressing the proposed activities and submitted to the Florida State Clearinghouse for review. A copy of the CZMA document is included in Appendix H. By letter dated October 7, 2005 to Eglin, the Florida State Clearinghouse determined that the Proposed Action is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). Appendix G contains a copy of the correspondence from the Florida State Clearinghouse dated October 7, 2005 and letters from other commenting agencies.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section describes the potential environmental effects of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. Issues discussed address effects to the resources described in Section 3.0.

4.1 Socio-Economic Conditions

4.1.1 Land Use Patterns

The methodology to assess impacts on land uses requires identifying those uses, as well as affected land use planning and control policies and regulations and determining the degree to which the Proposed Action would affect them.

4.1.1.1 Proposed Action

It is not anticipated that any of the activities associated with the Proposed Action would result in incompatible land use issues with either on-base or off-base land uses. The proposed pipeline would be constructed entirely on Eglin AFB reservation and therefore would have no effect on the off-base environment. As indicated in Section 3.1.1 of this document, the land uses within a mile of Eglin AFB consist of a combination of commercial, residential, and undeveloped lands.

4.1.1.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, Okaloosa Gas would maintain its existing 6" pipeline and would not install the proposed 10" pipeline, as described in Section 2.0. Therefore, there would be no impacts to off base or on base land uses under the No Action Alternative.

4.1.2 Environmental Justice/Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks

As directed by Executive Order 12898, dated February 11, 1994, the potential for any disproportionately high or adverse effects on human health or human environment of minority and/or low-income populations resulting from the proposed action has been assessed. Potential socio-economic impacts are assessed in terms of the direct effects of the Proposed Action on the local economy and related effects on population and socio-economic attributes.

4.1.2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would occur within the boundaries of Eglin AFB and would neither have an impact on low-income or minority populations, nor constitute a disproportionate impact to low income or minority populations in Okaloosa County. Due to the nature of the proposed activities, neither construction nor maintenance of the proposed pipeline would cause adverse human health or environmental effects on minority or low-income populations. Consequently, no disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental impacts to minority and/or low-income populations have been identified. Minor temporary benefits may occur as workers from the surrounding area may be employed to implement the Proposed Action.

Additionally, as mandated by Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks, the Proposed Action was assessed for the potential of environmental health and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children as a result of implementing the Proposed Action. The assessment took into consideration a public park that is located across the road from the pipeline terminus at College Boulevard (approximately 150-200 yards east of College Boulevard on Wolverine Boulevard). This public park is the Wolverine Girls Softball Complex. The complex is fenced and is surrounded with a grass buffer zone. Neither construction nor maintenance of the proposed pipeline would present adverse environmental health and safety impacts. There are no known environmental health or safety risks associated with the Proposed Action that may disproportionately affect children. The construction area would be restricted to effectively bar any person, including children, from unauthorized areas. Therefore, there would be no short-or long-term impacts on the health and safety of children.

4.1.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, proposed construction activities would not be implemented. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not result in any significant adverse socio-economic or environmental justice impacts.

4.2 PHYSICAL/BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

4.2.1 Air Quality

Air emissions resulting from the Proposed Action were evaluated in accordance with federal, state, and local air pollution standards and regulations. Air quality impacts from a proposed activity or action would be significant if they:

- increased ambient air pollution concentrations above any NAAQS;
- contributed to an existing violation of any NAAQS;
- interfered with or delayed timely attainment of NAAQS; or
- impaired visibility within any federally mandated federal Class I area.

4.2.1.1 Proposed Action

Construction emissions from the Proposed Action include contributions from engine exhaust emissions (i.e., construction equipment and material handling), and fugitive dust emissions (i.e., from clearing and trenching activities). Clearing and trenching emissions include fugitive dust from ground disturbance, plus combustive emissions from heavy equipment during the entire construction period. The construction phase of the Proposed Action is estimated by Okaloosa Gas to be 120 working days. Emissions generated by construction are temporary in nature and would end when the pipeline installation is complete. The emissions from fugitive dust would be minimized due to the implementation of control measures and BMPs in accordance with standard construction practices. For instance, frequent spraying of water on exposed soil during construction, proper soil stockpiling methods, allowing exposed soil only in areas where

immediate clearing and trenching operations are occurring, and prompt refilling of the trenched areas as soon as the pipe is laid, are standard operating procedures that Okaloosa Gas will use to minimize the amount of dust generated during construction. Construction equipment will temporarily emit exhaust gases, which are insignificant when compared to normal traffic along SR-85 and SR-123. Using efficient practices and avoiding long periods where engines are running at idle would help reduce combustion emissions from construction equipment. The nature of the activity associated with the Proposed Action will not require an air permit from the FDEP. The temporary construction-related combustive and fugitive dust emissions are not expected to adversely impact the air quality or visibility at Eglin AFB or areas in the vicinity of Eglin AFB.

4.2.1.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction emissions would occur, therefore there would not be any change in air quality within the area of the Proposed Action.

4.2.2 Noise Levels

Noise impact analyses typically evaluate potential changes to existing noise environments resulting from proposed construction activities. This consists of changes in noise levels for the exposed human population, as well as noise impacts on wildlife. Potential changes in the noise environment can be beneficial (i.e., if they reduce the number of sensitive receptors exposed to unacceptable noise levels), negligible (i.e., if the total area exposed to unacceptable noise levels is essentially unchanged), or adverse (i.e., if they result in increased exposure of sensitive receptors to unacceptable noise levels).

4.2.2.1 Proposed Action

Construction noise associated with the Proposed Action would be intermittent and short-term in duration. Noise at the proposed action route will increase slightly while clearing, construction and installation activities are occurring. Noise from trucks, backhoes, and trenching equipment will occur on a short-term limited basis. In general, construction noise would be intermittent and short-term in duration, and no long-term (recurring) noise impacts would result from implementation of the Proposed Action.

4.2.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented. Noise levels would continue at their present level.

4.2.3 Water Resources

The evaluation of potential impacts to water resources considers the potential effects of implementing the Proposed Action or No Action Alternative on water quality during construction, impacts to surface waters, and on the hydrologic characteristics of Eglin AFB.

4.2.3.1 Proposed Action

Impacts to surface water resources are not anticipated for the Proposed Action since subterranean boring techniques and effective BMPs will be utilized. The portion of the Proposed Action that crosses Tom's Creek and the two riprap storm water drainage areas along College Boulevard will be accomplished using underground directional boring technology to avoid any surface disturbance or adverse environmental impacts. BMPs to prevent soil erosion and for sediment control measures will be implemented during the construction phase of the project, as detailed in Section 2.2. These BMPs will minimize or eliminate any impact on water resources resulting from the Proposed Action. Therefore, impacts to surface water resources are not anticipated for the proposed project.

Mr. Dennis M. Mitchell, QEP, conducted a wetland assessment along the route of the Proposed Action on November 22, 2004. Wetlands identified in the general wet area around Tom's Creek represent a fen type (Mitchell, 2004a). Drainage from the surrounding sandy steeps facilitates a relatively high organic collection in the bottoms as well as a (usually) continuous flow such that the pH is moderated to less than sharply acidic (Mitchell 2004a). For the portion of the Proposed Action that crosses Tom's Creek, subterranean boring would be utilized to avoid any surface disturbance or impacts to wetlands (Mitchell 2004c).

There are two small areas within the proposed route located approximately 1200 feet from the pipeline terminus on College Boulevard, which contain riprap for storm water drainage. An adjacent scrub-shrub type wet area was identified and flagged between the two riprap areas during the wetland assessment. For the Proposed Action, subterranean boring would also be performed at both of these riprap areas to avoid any impacts to this wet area (Mitchell 2004c).

The main wet area is the crossing at Tom's Creek. Tom's Creek is a well-documented body of water designated as an Okaloosa darter stream. The assessment of the general area of Tom's Creek concluded that the approaching sandy slopes (steeps) on both sides of Tom's Creek are in poor condition with regard to vegetative ground cover and were too delicate to install the pipeline by normal trench and backfill methods. Following long-standing best management practices for minimizing impacts, Okaloosa Gas will utilize directional boring to accomplish the pipeline crossing at Tom's Creek. Utilizing this method will minimize the potential for siltation and erosion to affect the creek or adjacent wetlands. Figure 2-2 identifies the proposed directional boring for the Tom's Creek crossing to avoid impacts to the existing wetlands shown on Figure 2-2.

The directional bore will be facilitated and staged in uplands with a beginning and ending buffer zone of sufficient length that would avoid any reasonable occurrence of fugitive soils that could reach the wet areas or creek. Erosion control barriers (staked hay bales and silt fences) will be installed in a horseshoe shape to contain the work area for the bore approaches. Okaloosa Gas will directionally bore approximately 2000 feet in order to safeguard the approximately 50-foot wide creek. The wetlands bordering Tom's Creek are approximately 800 feet in width. The 40 to 1 ratio of bore length to stream width, and the 2.5 to 1 ratio for the wetlands-width-to-bore-length is more than a sufficient margin of safety to protect the creek's integrity.

It is Okaloosa Gas' intention to avoid any difficult control areas; however, the boring under the creek bed will have a contingency plan against any loss-control of the drilling mud during operations (frac-outs). The standard for care in this type bore is to use state approved bentonite drilling fluid and to continuously monitor the pressure and volume return of the drilling mud. Contractor technicians will monitor the progress of the bore with a special sensor that accurately tracks the horizontal, vertical and angular progress of the computerized drill head so the machine operator can steer the bore exactly where it needs to go (+/- 1" in most cases). It will be possible to monitor and control the drilling operation at a sufficient depth of 15-20 feet below the floor of the creek. The computerized guidance system has special sensors that continuously monitor both pressure and volume. Any deviation from either pressure or volume would be recognized immediately.

As additional control, Okaloosa Gas will have trained personnel on site during horizontal boring activity as well as third party biological and engineering consultants to continuously inspect for the occurrence of any excursions. If excursions are sighted, drilling will be stopped until actions are taken to remediate the situation. An immediate assessment of any clean up will be made and both Eglin and FDEP personnel would be notified immediately for consultation. When these two parties approve of the action, the drilling would continue in a manner to find a depth that will remain secure for the drilling mud to stay subterranean.

A primary concern centered on potential impacts to the Okaloosa darter habitat occurring in Tom's Creek. Utilizing proper subterranean boring techniques to bore under Tom's Creek, combined with the use of appropriate BMPs (i.e., staked hale bales and silt fences), will effectively avoid any contact with Tom's Creek and the Okaloosa darter and eliminate the potential for erosion to occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

The second wet area within the proposed route is located approximately 1200 feet from the pipeline terminus on College Boulevard as shown on Figure 2-3. This area consists of a FDOT storm water control device (shallow holding ditch pocket containing riprap for storm water drainage) for the adjacent roadway. This area is questionable as being a wetland, however the decision was made by Okaloosa Gas to bore under it and avoid any impacts to this area. The bore will be short and simple and control is expected to be easy. Figure 2-3 illustrates the proposed directional boring for this area to avoid impacts to the wet areas as shown on Figure 2-3.

Impacts to groundwater resources are not anticipated for the Proposed Action. The average depth for burying the proposed 10" pipeline is four feet (4'). There are no groundwater intrusion issues at these shallow depths. Eglin AFB receives its drinking water from deep groundwater wells (about 600 feet below mean sea level) that draws water from the Floridan aquifer, the primary source of public water in Northwest Florida. There have been no adverse impacts to groundwater resources associated with previous Okaloosa Gas pipeline installations on Eglin AFB.

4.2.3.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no construction would occur and no impacts to water resources would result.

4.2.4 Geology, Soils, Topography

Impacts to earth resources can be avoided or minimized if proper construction techniques and erosion control measures are incorporated into project development and design. Under the Proposed Action, up to approximately 16.66 acres, more or less, of land surface would be temporarily disturbed as a result of construction and installation activities.

4.2.4.1 Proposed Action

Soils occurring along the Proposed Action route are typical of the types of soil that occur over much of Eglin AFB. Sand is predominant, with Lakeland Sand being the most common soil type found within the region of influence of the Proposed Action. Soil density is relatively low, reflecting the high permeability of the surface soils and the relatively low direct runoff in the area. Soils exposed during trenching activities are subject to erosion. Implementation of construction BMPs would be employed to minimize impacts associated with erosion. These BMPs would include, but not be limited to installation of silt fencing and staked hay bales, application of water sprays to keep soil from becoming airborne, and mulching of disturbed areas as soon as possible, as appropriate. The nature of the construction involves relatively small quantities of excavation over the linear course. The impacts to soils would be minimal and temporary.

The Proposed Action would require only minimal clearing activities to uplands for the pipeline installation. Okaloosa Gas estimated the total area to be cleared at 9.15 acres. Of this total, 1.7 acres is on the Gulf Power Company easement (Mitchell 2004b). Although a 30' wide easement is being requested from the Eglin Encroachment Committee for the Proposed Action, Okaloosa Gas will perform minimal clearing and will leave a buffer at the Eglin AFB spray field pond (King 2004b). Trenching activities associated with the installation of the proposed 10" pipeline will require removal of grassed areas, soils, and a minimal number of trees and brush. During construction and installation of the proposed pipeline, BMPs will be used to control erosion and storm water runoff, especially around the portion of the proposed pipeline that intersects Toms Creek. Erosion from trenching activities is expected to be minimal as BMPs will be implemented throughout the whole work corridor, and because the trench will be refilled as soon as the pipe is laid. During trenching operations, BMPs, including the use of temporary silt fences and staked turbidity and hay bale barriers, will be used to control fugitive soil movements and to control any excessive rutting or sedimentation. These controls will be placed on both sides of the work area throughout the pipeline construction corridor.

No significant impacts to soils or geology from the Proposed Action are anticipated.

4.2.4.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, none of the proposed construction activities would occur, and there would be no new impacts to earth resources.

4.2.5 Vegetation and Wildlife Habitat

Evaluation of impacts is based upon 1) the importance (legal, commercial, recreational, ecological, or scientific) of the resource, 2) the rarity of a species or habitat regionally, 3) the sensitivity of the resource to proposed activities, and, 4) the duration of the impact. Impacts to biological resources are considered to be greater if priority species or habitats are adversely affected over relatively large areas and/or disturbances cause reductions in population size or distribution of a priority species.

4.2.5.1 Proposed Action

There are no known sensitive plant species that would be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action. As a result, impacts to vegetation communities and individual populations would be expected to be minor under the Proposed Action. Vegetation present along the proposed pipeline route is limited to grassy areas, and areas of mixed oak with slash pine and scattered longleaf pine. No impacts to wetlands would occur as a result of the Proposed Action. Jurisdictional wetlands within the Eglin reservation near the Proposed Action route will be avoided by means of subterranean boring and limiting the trenching to the berm (highway bed) areas along the pipeline route.

A Federal listed and state listed threatened and endangered species inhabit the project area, the Okaloosa darter and the Florida black bear. The proposed activity at Tom's Creek, a known habitat for the federally endangered Okaloosa darter, will be accomplished by subterranean boring to effectively avoid any contact with the creek or the Okaloosa darter. The use of BMPs, as described in Section 2.2, should also effectively eliminate the potential for erosion to occur as a result of project activities. Both Eglin Natural Resources personnel and a consulting biologist employed by Okaloosa Gas will monitor the creek during the boring activities as an additional BMP to avoid or mitigate any impacts. Special controls to eliminate soil erosion and control storm water runoff into Tom's Creek and adjacent wetlands will be employed on the boring approaches both north and south of Tom's Creek as described in Section 2.2 of this EA.

The Florida black bear currently has no federal status, however, is protected by the state and is state listed as threatened. Florida black bear use along the area of the proposed activity is expected to be sporadic and it is unlikely that bears would be in the area during construction activity. Black bears are known to prefer remote, impenetrable habitats. However, if bear were sighted during the proposed activity, Eglin Natural Resources personnel would be notified and construction activity would be modified temporarily to allow for the bear to escape.

The Proposed Action as outlined in this EA is not expected to have any adverse impacts to biological species or habitats. A Section 7 consultation prepared in accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) by Eglin Natural Resources concluded that construction of this pipeline is not likely to have any adverse impacts to species. A copy of the Biological Assessment is included in Appendix D.

4.2.5.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed activities would not be implemented and therefore, there would be no impact to vegetation or wildlife.

4.2.6 Utilities/Infrastructure

The criteria for evaluating impacts to transportation and utility service include potential for disruption and/or permanent degradation of the resource.

4.2.6.1 Proposed Action

Implementation of the Proposed Action would not alter traffic circulation on Eglin AFB. During roadway construction activities, Okaloosa Gas will comply with the Roadway and Traffic Control Standards established by the FDOT. The Guideline that will be used during construction along SR-85 and SR-123 is the two lane, two-way rural or night operations, Index No. 602 of January 2000 Publication (King, 2005c). Coordinating with the surrounding communities and the FDOT would mitigate any impacts to roadway vehicular traffic during construction activity. These impacts would be short-term and temporary, occurring only for the duration of the construction period along SR-85 and SR-123.

With the implementation of the Proposed Action, no adverse impacts are anticipated to the potable water supply, electricity, wastewater treatment systems, or natural gas supplies to Eglin AFB. In fact, the Proposed Action would result in beneficial effects associated with providing additional natural gas capacity to the southern portions of Okaloosa County, including Eglin AFB.

4.2.6.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, pipeline construction and installation would not occur and additional natural gas capacity to the Niceville, Valparaiso, and Eglin AFB areas would not be provided.

4.2.7 Hazardous Material

An evaluation was made of impacts from hazardous material usage with regard to the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative.

4.2.7.1 Proposed Action

Due to the nature of the operation, the proposed action does not include the transfer, storage, or disposal of any of hazardous waste materials.

4.2.7.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not occur. Consequently, the No Action Alternative would not produce any new impacts to hazardous materials and waste management.

4.3 Cultural Resources

4.3.1 Archaeology and Historical Preservation

A number of Federal regulations and guidelines have been established for the management of cultural resources. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), as amended, requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Historic properties are cultural resources that are listed in, or eligible for listing in, the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Eligibility evaluation is the process by which resources are assessed relative to NRHP significance criteria for scientific or historic research, for the general public, and for traditional cultural groups.

Under Federal law, impacts to cultural resources may be considered adverse if the resources have been determined eligible for listing in the NRHP. Analysis of potential impacts to cultural resources considers direct impacts that may occur by physically altering, damaging, or destroying all or part of a resource; altering characteristics of the surrounding environment that contribute to the resource's significance; introducing visual or audible elements that are out of character with the property or alter its setting; or neglecting the resource to the extent that it deteriorates or is destroyed. Direct impacts can be assessed by identifying the types and locations of proposed activity and determining the exact location of cultural resources that could be affected. Indirect impacts generally result from increased use of an area.

An archaeological survey has been completed along the route of the Proposed Action. No cultural resources were identified during this effort. Based on these findings, the Proposed Action should not have a significant impact on cultural resources. Eglin forwarded a copy of the survey to the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The SHPO concurred with this determination. A copy of the letter from the SHPO dated May 19, 2005 is included in Appendix E.

4.3.1.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, construction activities would not take place as proposed. Impacts to cultural resources are not expected under this alternative.

4.4 Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA)

4.4.1 Proposed Action

A CZMA consistency determination was prepared by Eglin's Natural Resources Section addressing the proposed activities and submitted to the Florida State Clearinghouse for review. A copy of the CZMA document is included in Appendix H. By letter dated October 7, 2005 to Eglin, the Florida State Clearinghouse determined that the Proposed Action is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). Appendix G contains a copy of the consistency statement from the Florida State Clearinghouse dated October 7, 2005 and letters from other commenting agencies.

4.4.1 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the activities associated with the Proposed Action would not occur and no CZMA determination would result.

4.5 Indirect And Cumulative Impacts

CEQ regulations stipulate that the cumulative effects analysis within an EA should consider the potential environmental impacts resulting from the "incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions" (40 CFR 1508.7).

Cumulative effects are most likely to arise when a relationship or synergism exists between a proposed action and other actions expected to occur in a similar location or during a similar time period. Actions overlapping with or in close proximity to the proposed action would be expected to have more potential for a relationship than those more geographically separated. Similarly, actions that coincide in time would offer higher potential for cumulative effects. This EA addresses the impacts of the Proposed Action, to the extent that these impacts can be identified, as well as reasonably foreseeable potential actions in the vicinity of the Proposed Action.

Projects that are proposed or that have recently been completed in the vicinity of the Proposed Action were identified and examined by Okaloosa Gas in conjunction with planning of the Proposed Action. These projects include: the proposed SR-85/SR-123 flyover, the proposed Niceville Bypass, a recently installed water line by Okaloosa County Water and Sewer (OCWS) along the north side of Lewis Turner Boulevard (Highway 189), the potential for future four-laning of Wolverine Bypass at the eastern terminus of the Proposed Action, and other construction projects contained in FDOT's 5-Year Plan.

The proposed SR-85/SR-123 flyover project is in various stages of planning and development and is subject to change prior to actual development. However, Okaloosa Gas has determined that there should be no conflict between the Proposed Action and the proposed project (Rhebi, 2005c). Okaloosa Gas examined the currently preferred route of the proposed Niceville Bypass with regard to the location of the Proposed Action. As shown on Figure 4-1, the nearest point of

the proposed Niceville Bypass to the Proposed Action is approximately 2.1 miles; therefore, the Proposed Action should not be in conflict with the proposed bypass.

The recently installed OCWS water line is adjacent to the FDOT right-of-way. The location of the Proposed Action would be outside the water line easement on its own easement. The Proposed Action would cross the water line in two different locations: at General Bond Boulevard and at SR-123. It is a requirement that there be a minimum separation of one-foot between the two pipelines. Okaloosa Gas' proposed pipeline would cross in both locations below the water line with sufficient clearance (Rhebi, 2005c).

Okaloosa Gas is acquiring an easement from the Air Force for the Proposed Action, which is outside and adjacent to the Wolverine Bypass right-of-way. Therefore, any future plans for four-laning of Wolverine Bypass would not be in conflict with the Proposed Action.

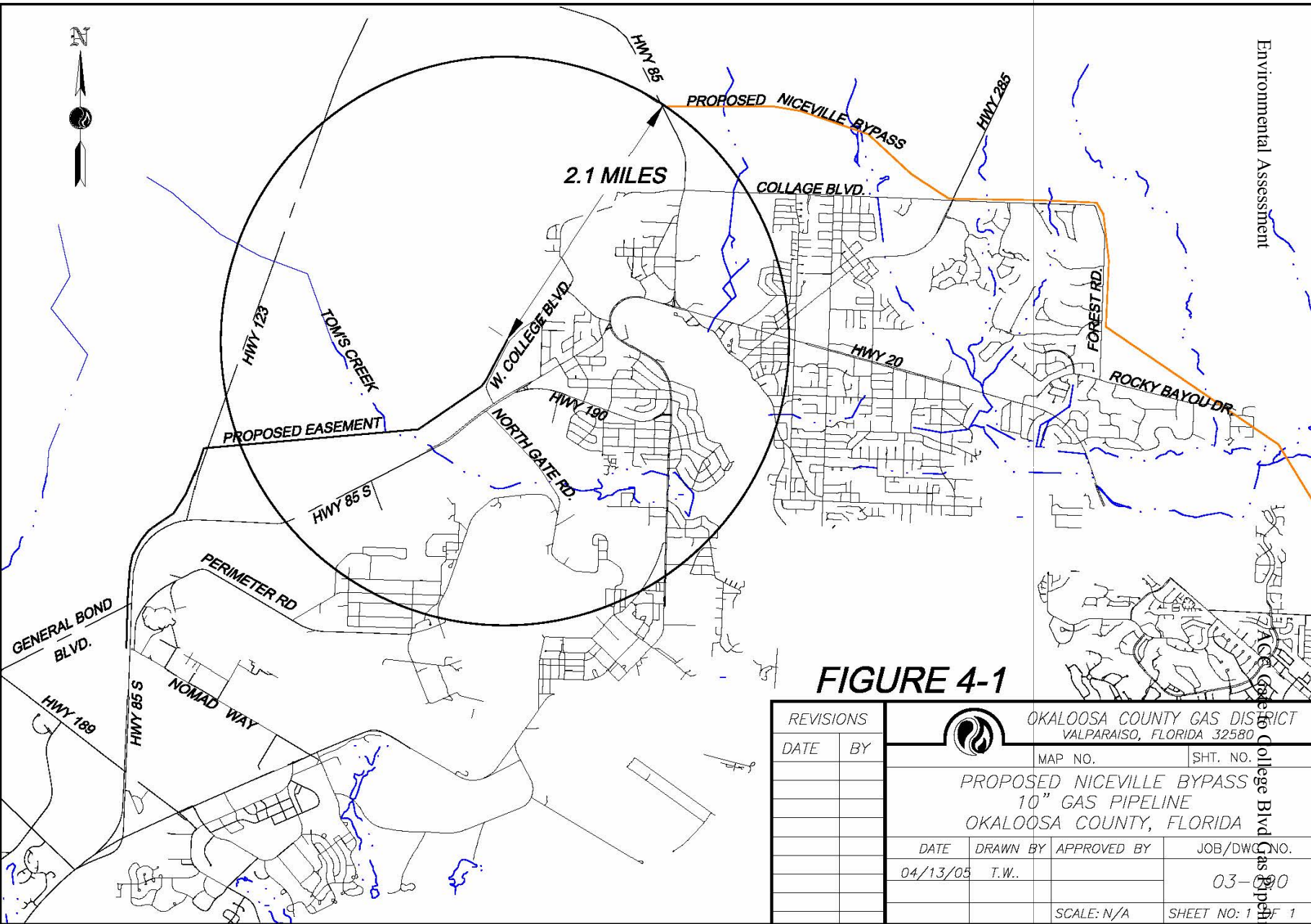


FIGURE 4-1

REVISIONS		OKALOOSA COUNTY GAS DISTRICT VALPARAISO, FLORIDA 32580	
DATE	BY	MAP NO.	SHT. NO.
		PROPOSED NICEVILLE BYPASS 10" GAS PIPELINE OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA	
		DATE	JOB/DWG NO.
		04/13/05	03-000
		SCALE: N/A	SHEET NO: 1 OF 1

5.0 AGENCIES AND OTHERS CONSULTED

The following agencies and others were consulted regarding consideration of the Proposed Action and in support of the preparation of this EA:

Dr. Paul R. Bolduc, 96 CEG/CEVSP, Eglin AFB, (850) 882-4436

Ms. Jackie Jones, Administration, Okaloosa Gas District, (850) 729-4861

Mr. Gordon King, Vice President of Operations, Okaloosa Gas District, (850) 729-4840

Mr. Bob Miller, 96 CEG/CEVSN, Eglin AFB, (850) 883-1153

Mr. Dennis M. Mitchell, QEP, and Agent for Okaloosa Gas District, (850) 652-4326

Mr. Larry O'Donnell, Environmental Manager, Submerged Lands & Environmental Resources Program, FDEP, (850) 595-8300, extension 1124

Ms. Jennifer Poirier, SAIC, 96 CEG/CEVSN, Eglin AFB, (850) 882- 8397

Mr. Essa Rhebi, Systems Engineer, Okaloosa Gas District, (850) 729-4870

Ms. Mica Schneider, FDEP, (850) 595-8300, extension 1107

Mr. Scott Shifflett, Environmental Specialist, FDEP, (850) 595-8300, extension 1127

Ms. Lynn Shreve, 96 CEG/CEVH, Eglin AFB, (850) 883-5201

6.0 LIST OF PREPARERS

This EA was prepared by:

Ms. Cynthia Arnold, REM, Gulf Coast Environmental & Engineering, Inc.
(850) 433-8588

Mr. Dennis M. Mitchell, QEP
(850) 652-4326

7.0 REFERENCES

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Appendix A

CORRESPONDENCE FROM EGLIN ENCROACHMENT COMMITTEE



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS AIR ARMAMENT CENTER (AFMC)
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA

Mr. Robert J. Arnold
Eglin AFB Encroachment Committee
101 West D Avenue, Suite 222
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5492

21 JUN 2004

The Gordon M. King
P.O. Box 548
Okaloosa Gas District
Valparaiso, FL 32580-0548

Dear Mr. King

I am pleased to inform you that your request for an easement along State Routes 85, 123, Gulf Power easement and Wolverine Boulevard to allow installation of a gas pipeline is conceptually approved.

Your next step is to contact the Eglin AFB Real Estate Officer, Ms. Lorraine Calson, (850) 882-1350, to work the details for the easement. She will require four hard copies of a certified survey for the project area, a digital file of the survey, a legal description and third party consent letters from adjoining easement owners. Ms. Calson will also initiate the required environmental documentation.

Your point of contact for this matter is Mr. Brian Brown in our Encroachment Office. If you have questions concerning this matter, please contact Mr. Brown at (850) 882-9550.

Sincerely

ROBERT J. ARNOLD
Chairman

Appendix B

PERMIT EXEMPTION FROM FDEP DATED JULY 20, 2005



Department of Environmental Protection

Jeb Bush
Governor

Northwest District
160 Governmental Center
Pensacola, Florida 32502-5794

Colleen M. Castille
Secretary

July 20, 2005

Okaloosa Gas District
P.O. Box 548
Valparaiso, Florida 32580-0548

Dear Sirs:

On March 4, 2005, we received your application, File No. 46-0245813-001-DE, to directional bore a 10-inch natural gas pipeline for a distance of 4.58 miles beneath a jurisdictional wetland crossing and Tom's Creek, all within Eglin Air Force Base property, Class III Waters of the State, Prohibited Shellfish Harvesting Area, Sections 2, 9-11, 16, 17, & 20, Township 01 South, Range 23 West, Latitude: 30°30'26.95"N Longitude: 86°31'47.69W, Okaloosa County.

Your application has been reviewed to determine whether it qualifies for regulatory authorization and any required authorization to use state-owned (sovereign) submerged lands by the state of Florida.

This exemption is subject to the limits, conditions, and locations of work shown in the attached drawings, and is also subject to the attached 7 Specific Conditions, which are a binding part of this exemption. You are advised to read and understand these drawings and conditions prior to commencing the authorized activities, and to ensure the work is conducted in conformance with all the terms, conditions, and drawings. If you are utilizing a contractor, the contractor also should read and understand these drawings and conditions prior to commencing the authorized activities. Failure to comply with all drawings and conditions shall constitute grounds for revocation of the permit and appropriate enforcement action.

1. Regulatory Review - Exemption Verified

Based on the information submitted, the Department has determined that the directional bore of a 10-inch gas pipeline beneath jurisdictional wetlands and Tom's Creek, originating and terminating in upland locations is exempt, under rule 62-4.040(1)(b), Florida Administrative Code, from the need to obtain a regulatory permit under section 373.4145 of the Florida Statutes and chapter 62-312 of the Florida Administrative Code. This determination is made because the activity, in consideration of its type, size, nature, location, use, and operation, is not expected, either individually or cumulatively, to cause or contribute to the release of pollutants or harm to

resources in sufficient quantity, quality, content, or character as to reasonable justify regulation under section 373.4145 of the Florida Statutes, or chapters 62-25 or 62-312 of the Florida Administrative Code.

This determination is based on the information you provided the Department and the statutes and rules in effect when the application was submitted and is effective only for the specific activity proposed. This determination shall automatically expire if site conditions materially change or the governing statutes or rules are amended. In addition, any substantial modifications in your plans should be submitted to the Department for review, as changes may result in a permit being required. In any event, this determination shall expire after one year.

2. Authorization to use sovereignty submerged lands - Public easement

The Department acts as staff to the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Board of Trustees) and issues certain authorizations for the use of sovereign submerged lands. The Department has the authority to review activities on sovereign submerged lands under Chapters 253 of the Florida Statutes, and Chapter 18-21 of the Florida Administrative Code.

The activity may be located on sovereign submerged lands owned by the Board of Trustees. The activity is not exempt from the need to obtain the applicable proprietary authorization. As staff to the Board of Trustees, the Department has reviewed the activity described above, and has determined that the activity requires a public easement for the use of sovereign submerged lands. The final documents required to execute the public easement have been sent to the Division of State Lands. The Department intends to issue the public easement upon satisfactory execution of those documents. **You may not begin construction of this activity on state-owned, sovereignty submerged lands until the public easement has been executed to the satisfaction of the Department.**

Specific Conditions:

1. Best management practices for erosion control shall be implemented and maintained at all times during construction to prevent siltation and turbid discharges in excess of State water quality standards pursuant to Rule 62-302, F.A.C. Methods shall include, but are not limited to the use of staked hay bales, staked filter cloth, sodding, seeding, and mulching; staged construction; and the installation of turbidity screens around the immediate project site.

The applicant shall be responsible for ensuring that erosion control devices/procedures are inspected and maintained daily during all

phases of construction authorized by this permit until all areas that were disturbed during construction are sufficiently stabilized to prevent erosion, siltation, and turbid discharges.

2. Grass seed and mulch or sod shall be installed and maintained on all exposed and disturbed soil areas within 48 hours of completing construction, and at any other time as necessary, to prevent erosion, sedimentation or turbid discharges into waters of the state and/or adjacent wetlands. Upon establishment of a substantial vegetative cover, all turbidity barriers/erosion control devices shall be removed.

3. Turbidity - shall not exceed 29 Nephelometric Turbidity Units (NTU's) above natural background.

4. This exemption does not authorize any material to be excavated from within jurisdictional wetlands.

5. Directional bore locations shall originate and terminate in uplands, as specified in the attached permit drawings.

6. This exemption does not authorize equipment or construction materials to be placed in jurisdictional wetlands. All wetland limits shall be flagged and identified prior to construction.

7. During the directional drilling process, the ground surface shall be visually monitored for any impending sign of the frac out. The boring and vacuum operator shall monitor the pumping and return rates of the drilling fluid. The drilling process shall stop and the contingency plan activated if a frac out occurs.

Additional Information

This letter does not relieve you from the responsibility of obtaining other federal, state, or local authorizations that may be required for the activity.

Please retain this letter. The activities may be inspected by authorized state personnel in the future to insure compliance with appropriate statutes and administrative codes. If the activities are not in compliance, you may be subject to penalties under Chapter 373, F.S. and Chapter 28-14, F.A.C.

NOTICE OF RIGHTS OF SUBSTANTIALLY AFFECTED PERSONS

This letter acknowledges that the proposed activity is exempt from wetland resource permitting requirements under Rule 62-4.040(1)(b) of the Florida Administrative Code. This determination is final and effective on the date filed with the Clerk of the Department

unless a sufficient petition for an administrative hearing is timely filed under sections 120.569 and 120.57 of the Florida Statutes as provided below. If a sufficient petition for an administrative hearing is timely filed, this determination automatically becomes only proposed agency action subject to the result of the administrative review process. Therefore, on the filing of a timely and sufficient petition, this action will not be final and effective until further order of the Department. The procedures for petitioning for a hearing are set forth in the attached notice.

Be advised that your neighbors and other parties who may be substantially affected by the proposed activity allowed under this determination of exemption have a right to request an administrative hearing on the Department's decision that the proposed activity qualifies for this exemption. Because the administrative hearing process is designed to re-determine final agency action on the application, the filing of a petition for an administrative hearing may result in a final determination that the proposed activity is not authorized under the exemption established under Rule 62-4.040(1)(b) of the Florida Administrative Code.

The Department will not publish notice of this determination. Publication of this notice by you is optional and is not required for you to proceed. However, In the event that an administrative hearing is held and the Department's determination is reversed, proceeding with the proposed activity before the time period for requesting an administrative hearing has expired would mean that the activity was conducted without the required permit.

If you wish to limit the time within which all substantially affected persons may request an administrative hearing, you may elect to publish, at your own expense, the enclosed notice (Attachment A) in the legal advertisement section of a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the activity is to take place. A single publication will suffice.

If you wish to limit the time within which any specific person(s) may request an administrative hearing, you may provide such person(s), by certified mail and a copy of this determination, including Attachment A.

For the purposes of publication, a newspaper of general circulation means a newspaper meeting the requirements of sections 50.011 and 50.031 of the Florida Statutes. In the event you do publish this notice, within seven days of publication, you must provide to the following address proof of publication issued by the newspaper as provided in section 50.051 of the Florida Statutes. If you provide direct written notice to any person as noted above, you

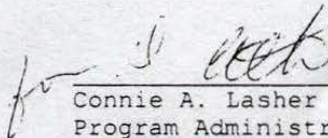
Okaloosa Gas District
File No.: 46-0245813-001-DE
Page 5 of 5

must provide to the following address of copy of the direct written notice.

Florida Department of Environmental Protection
160 Governmental Center
Pensacola, FL 32502

Thank you for applying to the Submerged Lands and Environmental Resource Permit Program. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Susan Radford at the letterhead address or at (850) 595-8300 ext. 1133.

Sincerely,



Connie A. Lasher
Program Administrator
Submerged Lands & Environmental
Resources Program

CAL:sr

Enclosure: Rule 62-4.040(1)(b), F.A.C
Attachment A
Drawings

cc: U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Pensacola Office
Kathy Griffin, Records Administration
Okaloosa County Public Records
Doug Fry, FDEP Tallahassee
Cynthia Arnold, Gulf Coast Environmental & Engineering, Agent

Appendix C

PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

MEMO

22 August 2005

FROM: 96th CEG/CEV-PA

TO: EMSP

SUBJECT: PUBLIC NOTICE "AAC Gate to College Blvd. Gas Pipeline EA,"
Eglin AFB, Florida

A public notice was published in the *Northwest Florida Daily News* on July 26th, 2005 to disclose completion of the Draft EA, selection of the preferred alternative, and request comments during the 15-day pre-decisional comment period.

The 15-day comment period ended on Aug. 9th, with the comments required to this office not later than Aug. 12th, 2005.

No comments were received during this period.

//SIGNED//

Mike Spaits

Public Information Specialist

NORTHWEST FLORIDA
Daily News

Published Daily
Fort Walton Beach, Florida
Distributed in Okaloosa, Santa Rosa & Walton Counties

State of Florida

County of Okaloosa

Before the undersigned authorized personally appeared _____

Stephanie J. Ellis, who on oath says that (s)he
is Classified Advisor of the Northwest Florida Daily News, a daily

newspaper published at Fort Walton Beach, in Okaloosa County, Florida;

that the attached copy of advertisement, being a Leg. 588801
in the matter of Public Notification

in the _____

Court, was published in said newspaper in the issues of _____

July 26, 2008

Affiant further says that the said Northwest Florida Daily News is a newspaper published at Fort Walton Beach, in said Okaloosa County, Florida, and that the said newspaper has heretofore been continuously published in said Okaloosa County, Florida, each day, and has been entered as second class mail matter at the post office in Fort Walton Beach, in said Okaloosa County, Florida, for a period of one year next preceding the first publication of the attached copy of advertisement; and affiant further says that (s)he has neither paid nor promised any person, firm or corporation any discount, rebate, commission or refund for the purpose of securing this advertisement for publication in the said newspaper.

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF OKALOOSA

Subscribed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me this July 26, 2008
(Date)

by Stephanie J. Ellis, who is/are personally known to me or
has/have produced Personally Known as identification.
(Type of identification)

Deann H.
(Signature)

Notary Public, Commission No. _____

(Name of Notary typed, printed or stamped)

Growers and Landscape Association, a statewide trade group based in Orlando.

Baby boomers are trading up to "McMansions," snapping up second homes, and spiffing up their yards with flowers and green things, said Robert Dolibois, executive vice president of the American Nursery and Landscape Association.

"We've seen a dramatic rate of growth," Dolibois said.

The university study estimated that the horticulture industry accounts for nearly 2 million jobs nationwide and \$64.3 billion in labor income. In terms of its "value-added" effect on the economy — that is, sales minus costs — Florida's green industry contributes about \$7.1 billion a year, second only to California's \$13.7 billion.

Texas was third at \$6.1 billion, Illinois fourth at \$4.3 billion and Pennsylvania fifth at \$3.7 billion.

Researchers said the study was the first such nationwide look at the industry. They said it was designed to measure how much the thousands of nursery businesses, sod growers, landscape architects, lawn-maintenance firms, garden centers, equipment manufacturers and related businesses contribute to the U.S. economy.

UF economist Alan Hodges, one of the study's three authors, said the horticulture industry has expanded steadily even during recessions, though regional markets have had their ups and downs.

In central Florida, one of the top regions in the state for the production of indoor and outdoor plants, last year's hurricanes hammered the green industry. And area growers say that they are still recovering.

"Last year was a total mess," said Scott Ritschard, manager of the 170-acre Gateway Gardens, a big grower of wholesale foliage in Oviedo. "The hurricane losses were terrible."

Gateway Gardens lost \$880,000 worth of plants drowned by rains or battered by winds, and it went about three months without income because sales essentially came to a halt for the rest of the hur-

Removing nonnative plants from around lakes and adding native, drought-tolerant plants and sturdy trees add to property values, Thomas said, while also helping to reduce pollution and improve the environment.

Thomas started a nursery in 1991, at first to grow plants for his lakefront restoration and mitigation projects. But the nursery has since expanded to 15 acres under cultivation, so that it now yields plants for homeowners as well, with Saturday-only sales of everything from native trees to shrubs that attract butterflies.

"Our sales have doubled in the last three years," Thomas said, as homeowners snap up native winged elm trees, cypress, live oaks and other hardy trees and plants that are better able to withstand everything from hurricanes to droughts.

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Public Notification

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, Eglin Air Force Base announces the availability of the draft Environmental Assessment and draft Finding of No Significant Impact for the AAC Gate to College Blvd. Gas Pipeline for public review and comment.

The Proposed Action of AAC Gate to College Blvd. Gas Pipeline, The Proposed Action consists of allowing Okaloosa Gas an easement along Eglin boundaries to install a 10 inch high-pressure natural gas pipeline along a 4.58 mile corridor from Eglin's ACC Gate to College Boulevard. This new line is to provide additional capacity to the Niceville, Valparaiso and Eglin AFB areas, while decreasing pressure on an existing 6 inch pipeline.

Your comments on these draft Environmental Assessments are requested. Letters or other written or oral comments provided may be published in the Final EA. As required by law, comments will be addressed in the Final EA and made available to the public. Any personal information provided will be used only to identify your desire to make a statement during the public comment period or to fulfill requests for copies of the final EA or associated documents. Private addresses will be compiled to develop a mailing list for those requesting copies of the final EA. However, only the names and respective comments of respondent individuals will be disclosed. Personal home addresses and phone numbers will not be published in the Final EA.

Copies of the AAC Gate to College Blvd. Gas Pipeline draft Environmental Assessment and draft Finding of No Significant Impact may be reviewed at the Fort Walton Public Library and Niceville Public Library. Copies will be available for review from Jul. 26th through Aug. 9th, 2005. Comments must be received by Aug. 12th, 2005.

For more information or to comment on these proposed actions, contact:

Mr. Mike Spaits, 96th CEG/CEV-PA, 501 De Leon Street, Suite 101, Eglin AFB, Florida 32542-5133 or email: mike.spaits@eglin.af.mil <<mailto:mike.spaits@eglin.af.mil>>. Tel: (850) 882-2878; Fax: (850) 882-6284.

Appendix D

BIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 96TH AIR BASE WING (AFMC)
EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE FLORIDA

RECEIVED
JUL 05 2005

05 JUL 2005

Mr. Stephen M. Seiber
Chief, Natural Resources Section
501 DeLeon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB FL 32542-5133

Ms. Janet Mizzi
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1601 Balboa Avenue
Panama City FL 32405

Dear Ms. Mizzi

The following information is being submitted to fulfill requirements under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Briefly, this report assesses potential impacts to the Okaloosa darter and its habitat associated with the subterranean boring activities at Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Florida (Figures 1 thru 3).

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is to install a 10" high-pressure natural gas pipeline along an approximately 4.58 mile corridor traversing Eglin AFB (Figures 1 and 2). Okaloosa Gas District (Okaloosa Gas) is requesting permission to install this proposed 10" natural gas pipeline which will connect with an existing pipeline on the west side of State Road (SR) 85 across from Eglin's Air Combat Command (ACC) Gate and terminate at College Boulevard, where it will connect to another existing Okaloosa Gas pipeline. The new pipeline is necessary to maintain system reliability and integrity to Okaloosa Gas's transmission system while allowing for a reduction to operating pressure in high consequence areas. The Proposed Action is located entirely within Eglin's military reservation.

The portion of the proposed pipeline that intersects Tom's Creek would be accomplished by subterranean boring to minimize any impacts to the creek as depicted on Figure 3. Utilizing this method will minimize the potential for siltation and erosion to affect the creek or adjacent wetlands. Several hundred feet of the steephead area on both sides of the creek bed will be bored to ensure control of fugitive soils on the bore approaches.

Biological Information

One federally listed endangered species, the Okaloosa darter, is known or has potential to occur within the work area. The Okaloosa darter is found in six small Choctawhatchee Bay tributaries located in the Sandhills ecological association of the Eglin Mainland Reservation. The Service listed the Okaloosa darter as endangered on 4 June 1973 (38 FR 14678). No critical habitat has been designated for this species. The Okaloosa darter typically occurs along the

margins of flowing streams where detritus, root mats and vegetation are present. The darter's diet consists primarily of immature aquatic insect larvae. Spawning occurs from March to October, with the greatest amount of activity taking place during April. The spawning occurs in beds of clean, current-swept macrophytes (large aquatic plants). Okaloosa darter habitat is sensitive to a variety of disturbances. Erosion can increase siltation and imperil the darter's habitat. Its range has also been reduced by habitat modification and encroachment by the brown darter.

Determination of Impacts

The total length of streams inhabited by the Okaloosa darter is 390.7 km (242.8 miles). The approximate length of the portions of Tom's Creek potentially affected by this pipeline construction is an estimated 5.1 km (3.2 miles) for Tom's Creek, which is the approximate length of stream downstream from the crossing sites. This is approximately 1.3 percent of the total habitat.

Erosion from the trenching activity is expected to be minimal, as best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented throughout the entire work corridor, and because the trench will be backfilled as soon as the pipe is laid. During trenching operations, BMPs, including the use of temporary silt fences and staked turbidity and hay bale barriers will be used to control fugitive soil movements and to control any excessive rutting or sedimentation. These controls will be placed on both sides of the work area. Floating sediment curtains will be used at the crossing of Toms Creek for control against siltation and erosion during the subterranean boring activity.

The use of BMPs should also effectively eliminate the potential for erosion to occur as a result of project activities. The site of subterranean boring at Tom's Creek will be monitored by both Eglin Natural Resources personnel and a consulting biologist employed by Okaloosa Gas during the boring activities as an additional BMP to avoid or mitigate impacts. BMPs will be utilized to eliminate soil erosion and control storm water runoff into Tom's Creek and adjacent wetlands will be employed on the boring approaches both north and south of Tom's Creek. Due to the minimal or no anticipated sediment runoff from the construction areas, and the limited amount of Okaloosa darter habitat potentially impacted by this pipeline construction, it is determined that construction of this pipeline is **not likely to adversely affect** the species.

Conclusion

In the unlikely event that a blowout occurs, all drilling activities will stop until the problem can be further analyzed and the amount of damage to the environment can be estimated. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be notified immediately if any of the actions are modified or if additional information on listed species becomes available, as a reinitiation of consultation may be required. If impact to listed species occurs beyond what has been considered in this assessment, all operations will cease and the Service will be notified. Any modifications or conditions resulting from consultation with the Service will be implemented prior to commencement of activities. The Natural Resources Section believes this fulfills all requirements of the Endangered Species Act, and no further action is necessary.

If you have any questions regarding this letter or any of the proposed activities, please do not hesitate to contact either Mr. Bob Miller (850) 883-1153 or myself at (850) 882-8391.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.M. Seiber', written in a cursive style.

STEPHEN M. SEIBER, GS-13
Chief, Natural Resources Section

Attachment:
Figures 1-3

INFORMAL CONSULTATION REGARDING
IMPACTS TO FEDERALLY LISTED SPECIES
RESULTING FROM SUBTERRANEAN BORING ACTIVITIES
ON EGLIN AFB FL

Prepared by: *Robert J. Miller* *6/29/05*
for Mike Nunley Date
Environmental Scientist
SAIC
Eglin Natural Resources Section

Reviewed by: *Bob Miller* *6/29/05*
Bob Miller Date
Endangered Species Biologist
Eglin Natural Resources Section

Bruce Hagedorn *6/30/05*
Bruce Hagedorn Date
Endangered Species Biologist
Chief, Wildlife Element
Eglin Natural Resources Section

Stephen M. Seiber *6/30/05*
Stephen M. Seiber Date
Chief, Eglin Natural Resources Section

USFWS CONCURRENCE:

Patricia A. Carmody *7/28/05*
Project Leader Date
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Panama City FL

FWS Log No.

4-p-05-274
*Periodic monitoring of boring is needed
to insure that measures to minimize harm
are being implemented.*



Figure 1. Location of Project Area with Respect to the Eglin Range Complex

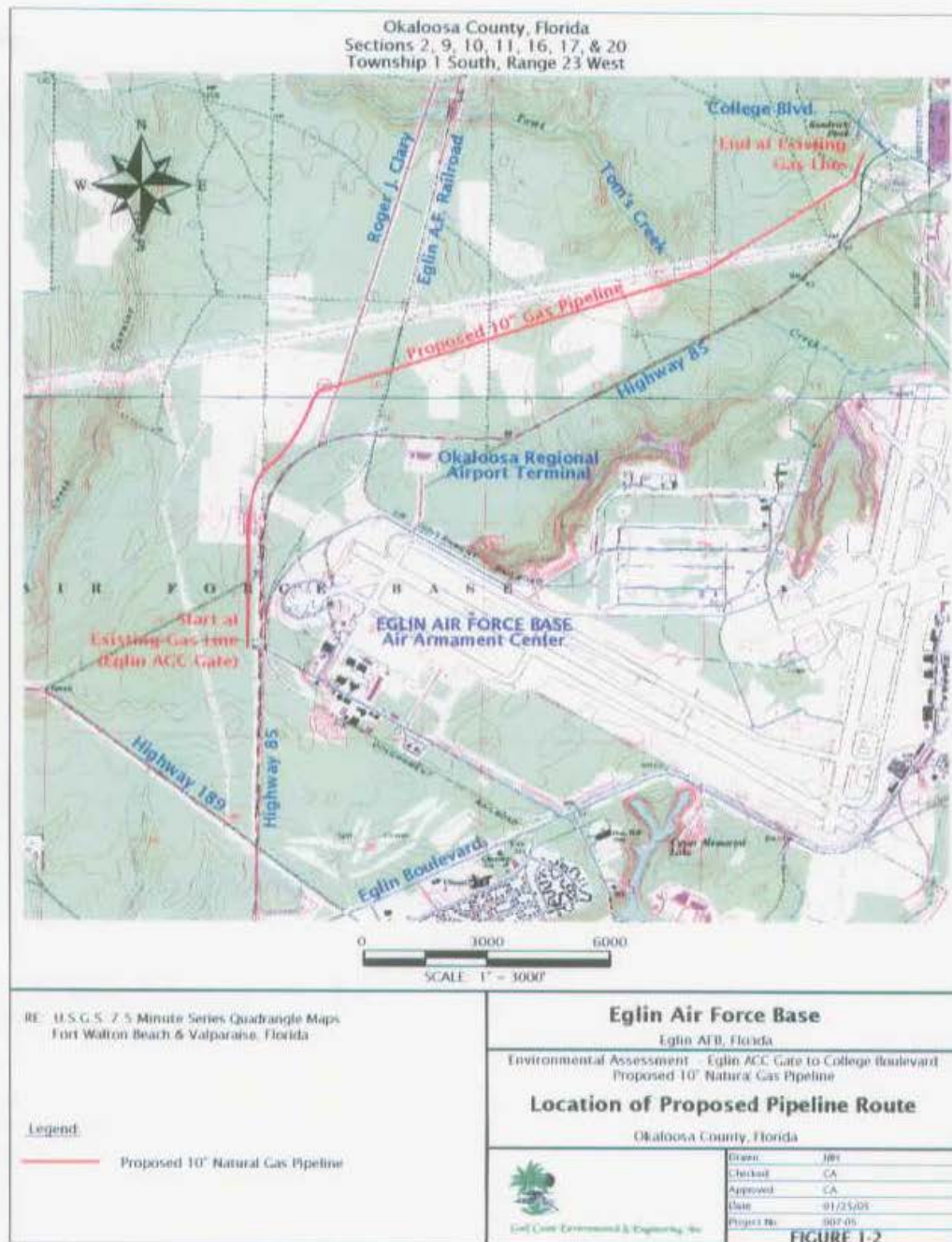


Figure 2. Location of Project Area and Proposed

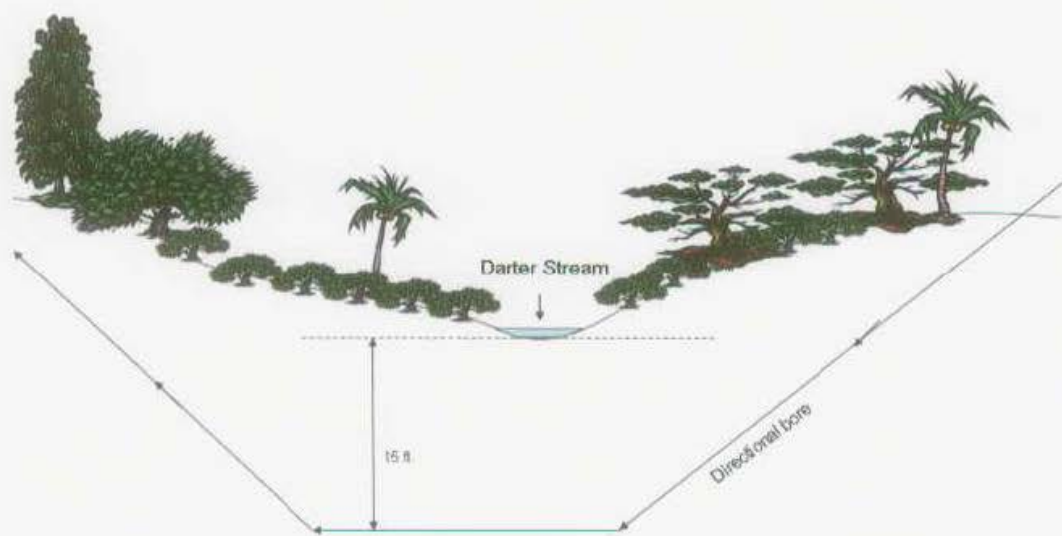


Figure 3. Directional Bore Drawing

Appendix E

CORRESPONDENCE FROM STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Glenda E. Hood

Secretary of State

DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Ms. Maria D. Rodriguez
Chief, Historic Preservation Division
501 DeLeon St., Suite 101
Eglin AFB, FL 32542-5105

May 19, 2005

Re: DHR Project File No. 2005-4663 / Received by DHR: May 5, 2005
Survey of X-720 Cultural Resources Support Eglin Air Force Base, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa & Walton Counties, Florida

Dear Ms. Rodriguez:

Our office received and reviewed the above referenced survey report in accordance with Section 106 of the *National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* (Public Law 89-665), as amended in 1992; *36 C.F.R., Part 800: Protection of Historic Properties*; and Chapter 267, *Florida Statutes*, for assessment of possible adverse impact to cultural resources (any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object) listed, or eligible for listing, in the *National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value.

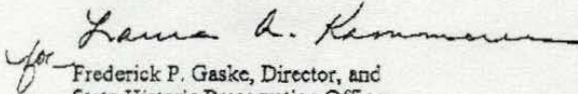
In November and December of 2004, Prentice Thomas & Associates, Inc. conducted an archaeological and historical survey of X-720 on behalf of Eglin Air Force Base. No cultural resources were identified during this effort.

It is the opinion of Prentice Thomas & Associates, Inc. that the planned activities will have no effect on cultural resources listed or eligible for listing in the *NRHP*, or otherwise of historical, architectural or archaeological value. Prentice Thomas & Associates recommends no further investigation of X-720.

Based on the information provided, our office concurs with these determinations and finds the submitted report complete and sufficient in accordance with Chapter 1A-46, *Florida Administrative Code*.

If you have any questions concerning our comments, please contact Claire Nanfro, Historic Sites Specialist, by phone at (850) 245-6333, or by electronic mail at cenanfro@dos.state.fl.us. Your continued interest in protecting Florida's historic properties is appreciated.

Sincerely,


Frederick P. Gaske, Director, and
State Historic Preservation Officer

500 S. Bronough Street • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250 • <http://www.flheritage.com>

☐ Director's Office
(850) 245-6300 • FAX: 245-6436

☐ Archaeological Research
(850) 245-6444 • FAX: 245-6436

☒ Historic Preservation
(850) 245-6333 • FAX: 245-6437

☐ Historical Museums
(850) 245-6400 • FAX: 245-6433

☐ Southeast Regional Office
(954) 467-4990 • FAX: 467-4991

☐ Northeast Regional Office
(904) 825-5045 • FAX: 825-5044

☐ Central Florida Regional Office
(813) 272-3843 • FAX: 272-2340

Appendix F

CZMA CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

FEDERAL AGENCY COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT ACT (CZMA) CONSISTENCY DETERMINATION

Introduction

This document provides the State of Florida with the U.S. Air Force's Consistency Determination under CZMA Section 307 and 15 C.F.R. Part 930 sub-part C. The information in this Consistency Determination is provided pursuant to 15 C.F.R. Section 930.39 and Section 307 of the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. § 1456, as amended, and its implementing regulations at 15 C.F.R. Part 930.

This federal consistency determination addresses the proposed activities described within the ACC Gate to College Boulevard Gas Pipeline, Eglin AFB, FL Environmental Assessment (EA), Chapter 2 of the EA.

Proposed Federal agency action:

The Proposed Action is to install, operate and maintain a 10 inch high-pressure natural gas pipeline along a route approximately 4.58 miles, within Eglin Air Force Base (AFB). This pipeline route would commence at the Eglin ACC Gate area, continue along the west side of SR-85 and SR-123, then cross SR-123 and run adjacent to the existing Gulf Power easement to terminate at College Boulevard where it will connect with an existing gas pipeline.

Okaloosa gas has requested an easement from Eglin's Encroachment Committee for the pipeline installation. The easement would be approximately 30 feet wide and 21,200 feet in length, which totals approximately 16.65 acres. This portion of the proposed action would require minimal clearing activities to uplands. Okaloosa Gas estimates the total area to be cleared at 9.15 acres.

Wetlands identified within the Eglin reservation near the proposed pipeline route would be avoided by means of subterranean boring and by limiting trenching activities to the berm (highway bed) areas along the intended route. Also, the portion of the pipeline that would intersect Tom's Creek would be placed by subterranean boring to minimize any impacts to the creek and the Okaloosa darter. The proposed action would be located entirely within Eglin's military reservation.

Federal Consistency Review

Statutes addressed as part of the Florida Coastal Zone Management Program consistency review and considered in the analysis of the proposed action are discussed in the following table.

Pursuant to 15 C.F.R. § 930.41, the Florida State Clearinghouse has 60 days from receipt of this document in which to concur with or object to this Consistency Determination, or to request an extension, in writing, under 15 C.F.R. § 930.41(b). Florida's concurrence will be presumed if Eglin AFB does not receive its response on the 60th day from receipt of this determination.

Florida Coastal Management Program Consistency Review

Statute	Consistency	Scope
Chapter 161 <i>Beach and Shore Preservation</i>	The proposed project would not adversely effect beach and shore management, specifically as it pertains to: -The Coastal Construction Permit Program. -The Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL) Permit Program. -The Coastal Zone Protection Program. All land activities would occur on federal property.	Authorizes the Bureau of Beaches and Coastal Systems within DEP to regulate construction on or seaward of the states' beaches.
Chapter 163, Part II <i>Growth Policy; County and Municipal Planning; Land Development Regulation</i>	The proposed action occurs either on federal property or on existing easements and is not anticipated to adversely effect local government comprehensive plans as they pertain to public interest.	Requires local governments to prepare, adopt, and implement comprehensive plans that encourage the most appropriate use of land and natural resources in a manner consistent with the public interest.
Chapter 186 <i>State and Regional Planning</i>	There will be no effect on state or regional planning requirements as a result of the proposed action.	Details state-level planning requirements. Requires the development of special statewide plans governing water use, land development, and transportation.
Chapter 252 <i>Emergency Management</i>	The proposed action would not increase the state's vulnerability to natural disasters. Emergency response and evacuation procedures would not be impacted by the proposed action.	Provides for planning and implementation of the state's response to, efforts to recover from, and the mitigation of natural and manmade disasters.
Chapter 253 <i>State Lands</i>	The proposed action will occur on federal property or via existing easements.	Addresses the state's administration of public lands and property of this state and provides direction regarding the acquisition, disposal, and management of all state lands.
Chapter 258 <i>State Parks and Preserves</i> Chapter 259 Land Acquisition for Conservation or Recreation Chapter 260 Recreational Trails System	State parks, recreational areas and aquatic preserves would not be effected by the proposed action. Construction would not occur within any aquatic preserves.	Addresses administration and management of state parks and preserves (Chapter 258). Authorizes acquisition of environmentally endangered lands and outdoor recreation lands (Chapter 259). Authorizes acquisition of land to create a recreational trails system and to facilitate management of the system (Chapter 260).

Chapter 375 <i>Multipurpose Outdoor Recreation; Land Acquisition, Management, and Conservation</i>	Tourism and outdoor recreation would not be effected. Opportunities for recreation on state lands would not be effected.	Develops comprehensive multipurpose outdoor recreation plan to document recreational supply and demand, describe current recreational opportunities, estimate need for additional recreational opportunities, and propose means to meet the identified needs (Chapter 375).
Chapter 267 <i>Historical Resources</i>	An archaeological survey has been completed for the area of the proposed action. No resources were identified; Eglin will forward a copy of the report to SHPO. Should archaeological sites be inadvertently discovered from ground-disturbing activities, 96 th CEG/CEVH would be notified immediately and further ground-disturbing activities would cease in that area.	Addresses management and preservation of the state's archaeological and historical resources.
Chapter 288 <i>Commercial Development and Capital Improvements</i>	The proposed action would occur on federal property. The proposed action is not anticipated to have any effect on future business opportunities on state lands, or the promotion of tourism in the region.	Provides the framework for promoting and developing the general business, trade, and tourism components of the state economy.
Chapter 334 <i>Transportation Administration</i> Chapter 339 <i>Transportation Finance and Planning</i>	The proposed project would not have an impact on transportation. The proposed project would have no effect on the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system.	Addresses the state's policy concerning transportation administration (Chapter 334). Addresses the finance and planning needs of the state's transportation system (Chapter 339).
Chapter 370 <i>Saltwater Fisheries</i>	The proposed action would not affect saltwater fisheries.	Addresses management and protection of the state's saltwater fisheries.
Chapter 372 <i>Wildlife</i>	A portion of the proposed project will intersect Tom's Creek, which is an Okaloosa darter stream. Subterranean boring will be utilized to minimize any impacts to the creek and the Okaloosa darter. A biologist will be on site during the activity to continuously inspect, up and down stream, for the occurrence of any excursions. If excursions are sighted, all activities will cease, and both Eglin and FDEP personnel would be notified immediately.	Addresses the management of the wildlife resources of the state.
Chapter 373 <i>Water Resources</i>	Impacts to wetlands are not anticipated as a result of the proposed action. Underground boring technology and BMP's will be	Addresses the state's policy concerning water resources.

	utilized to avoid any surface disturbance.	
Chapter 376 <i>Pollutant Discharge Prevention and Removal</i>	The proposed action does not include the transfer, storage or disposal of any hazardous waste material.	Regulates transfer, storage, and transportation of pollutants, and cleanup of pollutant discharges.
Chapter 377 <i>Energy Resources</i>	Energy resource production of the state, including oil and gas, and the transportation of oil and gas, would not be effected by the proposed action.	Addresses regulation, planning, and development of energy resources of the state.
Chapter 380 <i>Land and Water Management</i>	The proposed action would occur on federally owned lands. Under the proposed action, development of state lands with regional (i.e. more than one county) impacts would not occur. Areas of Critical State Concern or areas with approved state resource management plans such as the Northwest Florida Coast would not be effected. Changes to coastal infrastructure such as bridge construction, capacity increases of existing coastal infrastructure, or use of state funds for infrastructure planning, designing or construction would not occur.	Establishes land and water management policies to guide and coordinate local decisions relating to growth and development.
Chapter 381 <i>Public Health, General Provisions</i>	The proposed action does not involve the construction of an on-site sewage treatment and disposal system.	Establishes public policy concerning the state's public health system.
Chapter 388 <i>Mosquito Control</i>	The proposed action would not effect mosquito control efforts.	Addresses mosquito control effort in the state.
Chapter 403 <i>Environmental Control</i>	The proposed action would not effect ecological systems and water quality of state waters. Air quality criteria would not be exceeded and the impacts would not be significant.	Establishes public policy concerning environmental control in the state.
Chapter 582 <i>Soil and Water Conservation</i>	Soil erosion could potentially be accelerated due to ground operations, but would be controlled through best management practices. These management practices, as well as stormwater control measures, are addressed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 of the EA. Subterranean boring will be utilized to minimize soil erosion and siltation. A biologist will be on site during the activity to continuously inspect, up and down stream, for the occurrence of any excursions. If excursions are sighted, all activities will cease, and both Eglin and FDEP personnel would be notified immediately.	Provides for the control and prevention of soil erosion.

Appendix G

CORRESPONDENCE FROM FLORIDA STATE CLEARINGHOUSE AND COMMENTING AGENCIES



Department of Environmental Protection

Jeb Bush
Governor

Marjory Stoneman Douglas Building
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-3000

Colleen M. Castille
Secretary

October 7, 2005

Mr. Dan Nichols
Chief, Stewardship Branch
501 DeLeon Street, Suite 101
Eglin AFB, FL 32542-5133

RE: Department of the Air Force – Draft Final Environmental Assessment – ACC Gate to
College Boulevard Gas Pipeline, Eglin Air Force Base – Okaloosa County, Florida.
SAI # FL200508081397C

Dear Mr. Nichols:

The Florida State Clearinghouse, pursuant to Presidential Executive Order 12372, Gubernatorial Executive Order 95-359, the Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1451-1464, as amended, and the National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321, 4331-4335, 4341-4347, as amended, has coordinated a review of the above-referenced draft final environmental assessment (EA).

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) notes that the proposed project does not appear to impact wetlands as the construction methodology will be via subterranean boring rather than the traditional "cut and fill" methodology. It is suggested, however, that the applicant apply to the DEP for a Wetland Resource Permit. If the methodology remains the same (subterranean boring), the DEP can issue an exemption based on the minor impacts associated with the project. The applicant should take measures to contain the runoff from the drilling "muds" and water generally associated with this boring process on-site. The subterranean boring beneath Tom's Creek may require a Sovereign Submerged Lands Easement from the DEP if that portion of the creek is determined to be state-owned submerged lands. Please contact Mr. Larry O'Donnell in the DEP Northwest District Office in Pensacola at (850) 595-8300, ext. 1129 to discuss the documentation necessary to obtain a title determination prior to commencing work.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) notes that the draft final EA is determined to be consistent with their authorities (Chapters 370 and 372, *Florida Statutes*) under the Florida Coastal Management Program. FWC recommends, however, that the directional drilling under the documented Okaloosa darter streams be conducted with the utmost care to prevent accidental discharges or damage to the streams. Although no gopher

Mr. Dan Nichols
October 7, 2005
Page 2 of 2

tortoise burrows were observed during a site visit, FWC recommends that surveys for gopher tortoises be conducted prior to construction. Please refer to the enclosed FWC comments for further information.

Based on the information contained in the draft final EA and the comments provided by our reviewing agencies, the state has determined that, at this stage, the proposed project is consistent with the Florida Coastal Management Program (FCMP). The applicant must, however, address the issues identified by DEP and FWC staff prior to project implementation. The state's continued concurrence with the project will be based, in part, on the adequate resolution of issues identified during this and subsequent reviews. The state's final concurrence of the project's consistency with the FCMP will be determined during the environmental permitting stage.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the proposed project. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Lori Cox at (850) 245-2187.

Yours sincerely,



Sally B. Mann, Director
Office of Intergovernmental Programs

SBM/lec

Enclosures

cc: Barbara Ruth, DEP, Northwest District
Mary Ann Poole, FWC



Florida

Department of Environmental Protection

'More Protection. Less Process'



Categories

[DEP Home](#) | [OIP Home](#) | [Contact DEP](#) | [Search](#) | [DEP Site Map](#)

Project Information

Project:	FL200508081397C
Comments Due:	09/07/2005
Letter Due:	10/07/2005
Description:	DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE - DRAFT FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT - ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BLVD GAS PIPELINE, EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE - OKALOOSA COUNTY, FLORIDA.
Keywords:	USAF - ACC GATE TO COLLEGE BLVD GAS PIPELINE, EGLIN AFB - OKALOOSA CO.
CFDA #:	12.200

Agency Comments:

WEST FLORIDA RPC - WEST FLORIDA REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

No Comments - Generally consistent with the West Florida Strategic Regional Policy Plan.

OKALOOSA - OKALOOSA COUNTY

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION - FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Draft Final Environmental Assessment is determined to be consistent with our authorities (Chapters 370 and 372 Florida Statutes) under the Florida Coastal Management Program. We recommend that the directional drilling under the documented Okaloosa darter streams be conducted with the utmost care to prevent accidental discharges or damage to the streams. Although no gopher tortoise burrows were observed during the site visit, we recommend that surveys for gopher tortoises be conducted prior to construction.

STATE - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

No Comment

TRANSPORTATION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

No Comment

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION - FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The DEP notes that the proposed project does not appear to impact wetlands as the construction methodology will be via subterranean boring rather than the traditional "cut and fill" methodology. It is suggested, however, that the applicant apply to the DEP for a Wetland Resource Permit. If the methodology remains the same (subterranean boring), the DEP can issue an exemption based on the minor impacts associated with the project. The applicant should take measures to contain the runoff from the drilling "muds" and water generally associated with this boring process on-site. The subterranean boring beneath Tom's Creek may require a Sovereign Submerged Lands Easement from the DEP if that portion of the creek is determined to be state-owned submerged lands. Please contact Mr. Larry O'Donnell in the DEP Northwest District Office in Pensacola at (850) 595-8300, ext. 1129 to discuss the documentation necessary to obtain a title determination prior to commencing work.

NORTHWEST FLORIDA WMD - NORTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NO COMMENT

For more information please contact the Clearinghouse Office at:

3900 COMMONWEALTH BOULEVARD MS-47
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-3000
TELEPHONE: (850) 245-2161
FAX: (850) 245-2190

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION



RODNEY BARRETO
Miami

SANDRA T. KAUPÉ
Palm Beach

H.A. "HERKY" HUFFMAN
Enterprise

DAVID K. MEEHAN
St. Petersburg

KATHY BARCO
Jacksonville

RICHARD A. CORBETT
Tampa

BRIAN S. YABLONSKI
Tallahassee

KENNETH D. HADDAD, Executive Director
VICTOR J. HELLER, Assistant Executive Director

MARY ANN POOLE, DIRECTOR
OFFICE OF POLICY AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION
(850)488-6661 TDD (850)488-9542
FAX (850)922-5679

September 9, 2005

Ms. Lauren Milligan, Clearinghouse Coordinator
Florida State Clearinghouse
Florida Department of Environmental Protection
3900 Commonwealth Boulevard, Mail Station 47
Tallahassee, FL 32399-3000

RECEIVED
SEP 12 2005
OFFICE OF POLICY AND STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Re: SAI #FL2005008081397C,
Department of the Air Force – Draft
Final Environmental Assessment –
ACC Gate to College Blvd. Gas
Pipeline, Eglin Air Force Base,
Okaloosa County

Dear Ms. Milligan:

The Division of Habitat and Species Conservation, Habitat Conservation Scientific Services Section, of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) has coordinated agency review of the Department of the Air Force – Draft Final Environmental Assessment - ACC Gate to College Blvd. Gas Pipeline project, and provides the following comments and recommendations in accordance with the Coastal Zone Management Act/Florida Coastal Management Program (15CFR 930 SubPart F), the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Project Description

Okaloosa Gas has requested an easement from Eglin's Encroachment Committee for the installation of a 10-inch gas pipeline that would connect with an existing gas pipeline on the west side of State Road 85 across from Eglin's ACC Gate and terminate at College Boulevard, where it would connect to another existing pipeline. The easement would be 30 feet wide, approximately 24,200 feet in length, and approximately 16.65 acres. The Proposed Action would be located entirely within Eglin's military reservation, and would require minimal clearing activities to uplands for the pipeline installation. Wetlands identified within the Eglin reservation near the proposed pipeline route would be avoided by means of subterranean boring and limiting the trenching to the berm (highway bed) areas along the pipeline route. The portion of the proposed pipeline that intersects Tom's Creek would be constructed by subterranean boring to minimize any impacts to the creek and the Okaloosa darter.

Potentially Affected Resources

The Proposed Action would intersect a 30-foot-wide section of Tom's Creek, which is documented Okaloosa darter (*Etheostorna okaloosae*) habitat. The Okaloosa darter is federally listed as endangered and is endemic to small to moderate streams within the Choctawhatchee Bay system. Its current range is limited to six tributary systems in Okaloosa and Walton counties. Ninety-four percent of the drainage area of these streams is on Eglin Air Force Base (Jelks and Alam 1981). The biggest threat to Okaloosa darter streams is habitat and stream degradation, and specifically erosion and sedimentation, which deteriorates the water quality (Hoehn 1998).

The project area is primarily comprised of xeric upland habitat with predominantly Lakeland soils. Gopher tortoises (*Gopherus polyphemus*) are potentially present, although none were observed during the initial site visit. A state listed species of special concern, the greatest threat to gopher tortoises is habitat degradation (Cox et al. 1987).

Concerns and Recommendations

Maps/figures on pages 1-3 and 2-3 do not show the same proposed pipeline path. After discussions with staff at Eglin AFB-Jackson Guard Natural Resources Branch, the map on page 1-3 was determined to be erroneous. We recommend that this map be changed to reflect that the proposed pipeline route is adjacent to the Gulf Power powerline right-of-way.

Stream crossings are proposed in areas of documented Okaloosa darter occurrences. Further, the slopes along the streams are very steep and sandy, and thus can easily shift or erode if disturbed. Although Okaloosa darter populations are seemingly stable, given the limited range of this species (Jelks and Alam 1981), any habitat degradation could negatively impact the species. Therefore, we recommend that all Best Management Practices for erosion control, directional drilling, and monitoring are strictly adhered to in order to prevent damage to these streams. Staff at Eglin AFB-Jackson Guard Natural Resources Branch indicated that there have been at least two instances where there have been impacts to Okaloosa darter streams during directional drilling (Bob Miller, Eglin AFB, pers. comm.). Should an accidental disturbance occur, we recommend work be halted until appropriate corrective action be taken, state and federal agencies are notified, and an examination and restoration of the habitat can be completed. We also recommend that, although no gopher tortoise burrows were observed in the preliminary visit, a survey for gopher tortoises be conducted along the pipeline route before construction occurs. If any gopher tortoises or burrows are found, the FWC should be contacted for an appropriate permit before work proceeds.

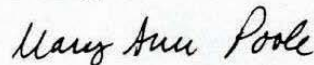
Summary

The Draft Final Environmental Assessment is determined to be consistent with our authorities (Chapters 370 and 372 Florida Statutes) under the Florida Coastal Management Program. We recommend that the directional drilling under the documented Okaloosa darter streams be conducted with the utmost care to prevent accidental discharges or damage to the streams. Although no gopher tortoise burrows were observed during the site visit, we recommend that surveys for gopher tortoises be conducted prior to construction. If you or your staff would like to

Ms. Lauren Milligan
Page 3
September 9, 2005

coordinate further on the recommendations contained in this report, please contact me at 850-488-6661, or email me at maryann.poole@MyFWC.com, and I will be glad to help make the necessary arrangements. If your staff has any specific questions regarding our comments, I encourage them to contact Arlo Kane at our office in Panama City (850-265-3677; email arlo.kane@myfwc.com).

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Poole, Director
Office of Policy and Stakeholder Coord.

map/tsh/km
ENV 1-3-2
u:\traci.wallace\FL200508081397c.doc
cc: Gail Carmody, USFWS-Panama City
Dan Nichols, Eglin AFB Stewardship Branch

Referenced Literature

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